Encounter

February 1966

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Journal
Eugène Ionesco

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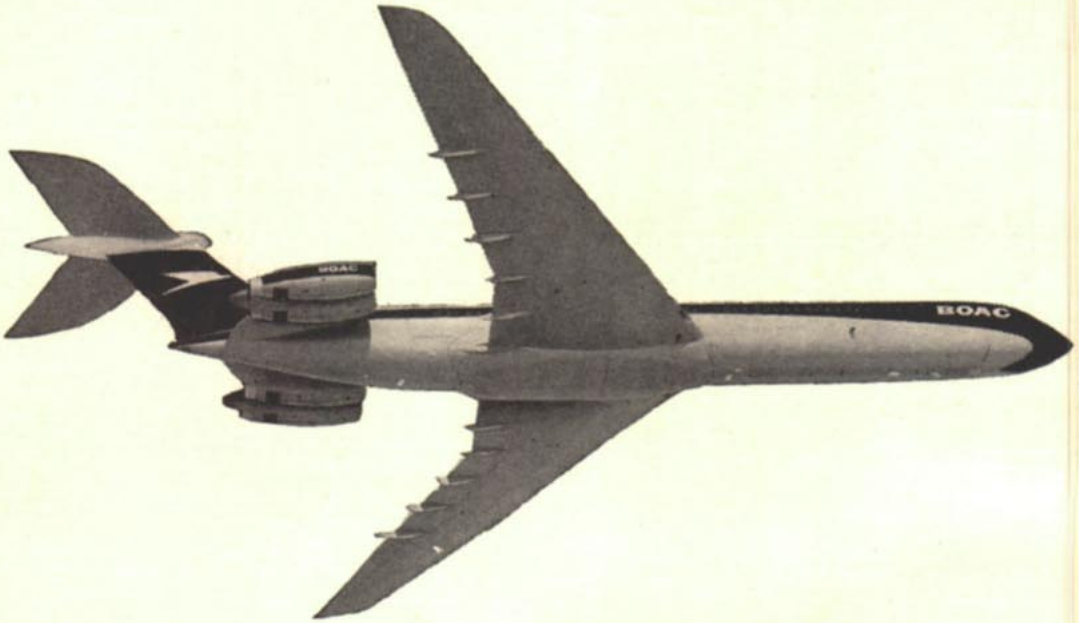

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Eugène Ionesco

Journal

February 1965

ACCORDING to Freud, the three obstacles which prevent us being free are anguish, pity, and disgust. This is the triple chain which binds us. We also know that psycho-analysis does not pass moral judgment. Things are as they are, and that's all there is to be said. Our task is simply to discover why they are as they are, why they have arrived at this particular stage. Psycho-analysis sheds light, it does not pass judgment. Psycho-analysis explains why we pass judgment, without judging the judgment itself.

But there are four, or even five, strands to the chain that binds us: hatred or aggressiveness are also obstacles to freedom, but it may be argued that hatred is only fierce disgust. Desire is the most serious obstacle in the way of our deliverance. And it is in this respect that Freudianism may link up in a sense with Buddhism. Not Zen Buddhism, since wishing to be free is still an act of will. We should have to wish to be free in order to get to the point of no longer even willing to be free.

This analogy between Buddhism and Freudianism seems to me to be particularly plausible since Freud himself, towards the end of his life, asserted, discovered, that we have within us, that our whole being bears within itself, the death wish, the yearning for peace, in his own words "the Nirvana instinct."

Desire or Eros makes us go on living. If we managed to elucidate, to divest of their mystery, Desire and all particular desires, *i.e.*, all the manifestations of Desire, the reasons for and secrets of Desire, our desires, desires in general would disappear. If we succeeded in discovering the true reasons for our reasons, there would no longer be any reasons for anything. Knots would be unloosed; we would sink into a state of indifference, of non-being. Also, indifference might allow us to go on living, in other words, it might make life cease to be unbearable.

No desire to live, no desire to die: just let things drift. Zen Buddhism or "metaphysical couldn't-care-less-ness"; yes, the final implications of psycho-analysis are not so very far removed from Zen Buddhism.

BEFORE LEARNING to neither live nor die, the problem for me is to learn first of all how to die. This is what I propose to do. Now is the time, now or never. No small task! In front of me rises an immense wall, an unscalable cliff. Far beyond my capabilities, for the time being at least. Yet I am in duty bound to get over it or through it. Such is the bidding of my deepest conviction, if I am to believe my dreams. And what else can a man believe, if not his dreams, which are the language of my innermost thought. When people say that we are not conscious during dreams, this is only a manner of speaking; we are conscious, we are lucid, only when we dream. For instance, I dreamed I was in the middle of a square, surrounded by dirty grey ruins. The square was nothing but waste ground, covered with brittle scrub and old, headless thistles, crackling with dryness. To the right, my wife. In front of me, a huge church, or rather the very high wall of a kind of church, a wall almost as wide as it was high: it was like the wall of a huge prison. Down below, on the right, a tiny, closed door. The grey-black wall of the church seemed to be pitted with little cells of a lighter grey. The wall now looked like a huge, vertical cemetery seen from a great distance, as it might appear if viewed from an aeroplane, had it not been standing on end.

To the left of the wall, to the left as I stood facing it, was a kind of very tall tower with, at the top, a baroque dome supported by pillars

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between which, on all four sides, I could see the sky, or rather a bleak, wan, and empty space. "You said the church was beautiful. You can see for yourself that this isn't true. In fact, it's very ugly," my wife remarked, adding, "I noticed this before you did. Maurice de G. thinks so too. He's an expert."

We moved to the left in order to walk round the building. Underneath the tower was a kind of passage leading to a kitchen black with filth and where the same wan light that I had seen at the top of the tower was coming through the holes in the walls.

Against the left wall was an old woman, black from head to foot; she was the cook and stood with her black apron in front of the blackened wall, on which hung black kitchen utensils. We went straight through the kitchen and found ourselves outside again, under the cheerless sky, on a slope covered with the same brittle, scrublike vegetation.

"THE X-RAY SHOWS that you have had cancer of the heart. We were wrong when we said that the pains in your back were caused by your arthrosis. You did, in fact, have cancer. But it has healed up of its own accord, leaving a scar."

"Tell me the truth, doctor. You know me well enough not to lie to me. I am strong enough to face the truth."

"Very well, I'll tell you everything, but I warn you I am going to tread on your toes." (A queer expression, but those were his very words.) "Since you want to know, you have not had cancer, you still have it." I tried to control my panic. "Look at the X-ray photographs here. This protrusion at the lower side of the heart where it curves inwards is the place where the cancer is. See for yourself."

I looked at the heart which was black and pear-shaped and protruded sideways at the bottom. Round the heart was a dark area pitted with tiny white marks or scars, which looked like those tiny white strips of whale-bone that are put in shirt collars to keep them stiff. I concealed my distress with difficulty, as several people were sitting round me and I felt ashamed. She was there among them. The outline of her body was lighter than that of the others. She was sitting on a bench with her legs crossed, smoking a cigarette, and seemed indifferent to my fear. I asked the doctor: "How long can you live with cancer of the heart?"

"Two or three months, two or three years, it depends on the vitality of the particular individual."

"More likely two months than two years," I said to myself. "No one with cancer in such a critical area can live longer than that. I had intended to learn to die; alas, I have set about it too late, I have hardly even begun. I shan't have time to finish. You need at least two or three years in order to learn to die, to unloose the bonds."

When I told my dream to Z., he said that my fear of death was concealing something else. He asked me to draw the heart and pointed out that it was forced out of shape, as if a hand were holding it tightly and squeezing it. My inability to escape from the inhibiting grip of this hand, which prevents aggressiveness, that is life, from being released and finding full expression, causes the feeling of mortal anguish.

I WAS IN a kind of semi-transparent trunk, perhaps made of plastic, and most probably floating in interplanetary space. I was sitting down but with my legs stretched out in front of me; I was naked and small, like a five or six-year-old child; in front of me, in the same position, was another child, who was the exact image of myself and was perhaps my double. All around the closed trunk stretched limitless cosmic space, dark and chaotic. There were gradations in the sombre hues of this cosmic space.

We came to the end of our journey. I think I was unaware of its purpose while I was inside the trunk. But now the aim was clear; we were on another planet. I was adult but still very young. I am always young in my dreams: between sixteen and twenty-two or twenty-three.

(Why? According to my own interpretation, for two reasons: *1*. Because I refuse to grow old and die, and because even now I cannot bring myself to address a man of forty with the familiar *tu*, since I feel that it is he who is the elder; hence a feeling of non-communication with people a little younger than myself or of my own age, whom I look upon as belonging to an older generation. This does not prevent me feeling out of sympathy with young people who also belong to a different generation. But as far back as my memories go, I have never had any point of contact with young people, and especially when I was young myself. *2*. I am seventeen in my dreams because that was the age at which all my problems of

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existence and knowledge first achieved clear formulation and obsessed my mind, and because they are still with me, unresolved. But is there any solution to fundamental problems? I mean: can we ever know what is meant by being born, growing old, dying, being here, being surrounded by all these things which I have never failed to contemplate with an astonishment that is still as fresh now as it was at the dawn of consciousness. What...? I ceaselessly ask myself. We only solve—and this satisfies most people who are quite content to go no further, since they wonder neither about the prime cause or origin nor about ultimate purposes—we only solve practical problems: science, technology, human activity provide only external, second-rate solutions; if we were made differently, the enormous technical advance would have lessened, instead of increasing, our feelings of anxiety, aggressiveness and rage, and that deep-seated, because irrational, discontent unleashed under cover of ideologies, which conceal the essential problem, hide us from ourselves, solve nothing and, on the contrary, threaten to blow up the whole show.)

There I was, then, on another planet. We arrived at a little station full of people, swarming with them. I could also see a motor-coach containing many of my fellow-passengers, including a one-eyed man with a black bandage over his left eye and a man with a black beard. I left the station with a companion, the unknown companion of our dreams, who is always perhaps our other self, a rather stern and critical self. With this companion I walked through the streets of the other planet, along a broad avenue, rather like the Boulevard Lefèvre in Paris. I was very worried and discussed the situation with my companion. Since it seemed unlikely that we would be able to return to earth, what would become of us? We had been assured that the space-ships could take us back, but I did not believe in this possibility; no way of getting back had yet been found. We were going to die on the planet. I thought nostalgically of the cemeteries on earth. We were doomed. My companion scolded me for my lack of courage. He sent me back to the station to get tickets for the return journey to the earth or for a tour of the planet with the people in the motor-coach, whose guide he appeared to be. At the station booking-office, a small, dark woman who looked like my mother spoke to me in Italian. I don't know Italian. It was the language of the inhabitants of the planet. I went out of the station to ask one of my fellow-passengers with a knowledge of Italian to help me to make myself understood. Not one could I find. I was also cut off from them by the crowd. I was alone in a foreign crowd, a densely packed, indifferent crowd belonging to another planet. I was very distressed; everything was grey and bleak; intensely distressed.

Z. tells me that my dreams are archetypal. The wall is an archetype; the box travelling through the cosmos and in which I am placed in an almost foetal position, is also an archetype.

"The anguish in your dream is to be explained by the fact that you have left the earth. You know what the earth stands for—the mother."

"Since dreams are true, at least we are clear on one point, the Martians speak Italian. That's something worth knowing."

WILD FEAR, panic. It grips me as soon as night begins to fall. I long for solitude, yet I cannot bear to be alone. Force of habit, perhaps. I think of both of them[1] and am afraid for them. Night falls—drops down on me, or rather I am swallowed up by it. Limitless night surrounds me, floods into me. It is a black ocean in which I am drowning. I am afraid of not seeing them again, afraid of dying without ever seeing them again. I feel the need for alcohol. One glass is enough to dispel fear. With security, aggressiveness appears and develops to the full. But for the moment, fear has the upper hand. They are a long way away, and alone. I want to protect them, I am so afraid for them.

Of course, I am often bored at home, but I feel safe when I am with my wife. When I cease to be afraid, I become bored. When I am bored, I feel better. Boredom, too, flourishes in security, is a sign of security. When I am in a rage, I feel better still. Anger is courage, and can even be heroism. That anger is blind is a very true saying. Heroism is unconscious. I think it was Clémenceau who said: *"Quand on a du caractère, il est mauvais"* (Strong characters are difficult characters). When you have a conscience, it is a bad one.

I am going to telephone to Paris.

SINCE THE DEATH WISH is present at the heart of all living things, since we suffer when we

[1] The feminine plural, *elles*, presumably refers to Ionesco's wife and daughter. (Tr.)

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try to repress it and since all living things yearn for peace and tranquillity, let us unloose the vital bonds and cultivate the yearning for death. Let us encourage it and water it as we would a plant and allow it to grow unimpeded. The repression of the death wish leads to suffering and gives rise to fear.

No, NO. I want to go on living, still go on living. I want the family. In short, I both want to be and to die. To be dead, dead, but still to be. Like everybody else. The big hospital dining-room, all white and full of light, of course, is naturally very healthy, just as the food must be healthy, and the moral conduct and the minds of the inmates, for that which is not healthy is not only unhealthy, it is a lapse from virtue. No one quite knows which virtue, perhaps a lapse from the virtue of being natural, but what this naturalness or nature is, obviously no one quite knows. It would seem that for the therapists, naturalness is a boy-scout-like mysticism, their religion.

IN THE DINING-ROOM, at the table next to mine, was a sick old man, enormous and with a blotchy complexion; he used crutches and was following a course of remedial therapy. His presence was bearable. Opposite me was a bald old man with a white beard, a healthy old man, what is called a well-preserved old gentleman; he had a clear, pink complexion and he ate with conviction, chewing his food slowly and masticating the hazel nuts and walnuts as he had been told to do. He was quite disgusting. He knew, or at least he believed, that what he was eating was giving him life. One mouthful meant two hours of life; another mouthful, two more hours of life; by the end of the meal he could be sure of having gained one week of life. But it was chiefly the look in his eyes which was unbearable, the keen, cunning, fierce look of the healthy old man. I asked if I could change tables. Such desperate eagerness to live, to cling to life—he would be in no hurry to let go—seemed to me at once tragic, dangerous, terrifying and immoral. I fully realise that I am detesting myself in him, since like him I am eager to go on living; I shall be like him in a few years' time; I cannot forgive him, just as I cannot forgive myself. Why else did I come here, if not to acquire a taste for living, to absorb health?

I am sure that the doctors and nurses who look after those more or less wealthy people, whose one preoccupation is the will to live and go on living, must be rather nauseated by them. I don't know why, but eating in a healthy, virtuous manner strikes me as immoral. I prefer excess, intemperance, gorging and surfeit. The gorging of food implies gratuitousness, freedom; you are not eating in order to live; you are eating until you are crammed full, until you burst; it's a way of killing yourself.

"YOU WANT TO LEARN to die," Z. said to me, "but you don't look as if you meant it. You come here with a tense expression and your whole attitude is that of a man who cannot unburden himself, cannot let himself go. When you agree to die, you will be calm and relaxed."

"I am fully aware of this," I replied, "teach me how to untie the knots. I know I ought to undo them on my own and that this is a task everyone must carry out for himself, but at least give me a little guidance, so that I can see how the bonds I cannot loosen are tied."

"In one sense, you are already dead. Being in the grip of contradictory impulses which inhibit you and keep you helpless and paralysed, you are dead."

"Dead in a different way, since dying means letting yourself go, and I cannot let myself go. Or perhaps the impulses you refer to are killing me in another way. I am living like a dead man." I said this quite spontaneously, then burst out laughing on realising the paradoxical nature of the remark.

"I WAS HIDDEN," said the man. "This is the beginning of the way." In the introduction to his book, *Tales of the Hasidim*, Martin Buber reminds us that, according to the Hasidim,

> ... the effective exploration of the heart is the beginning of the way in a man's life, but this exploration is only effective if it really leads to the way, for there is a kind of investigation of the heart which is sterile, which leads only to self-torture, despair, and an even greater entanglement.

Is this not an anticipation of psycho-analysis, which cleanses, purifies, and exorcises, whereas the self-analysis practised by writers and diarists is futile and disheartening?

Hasidism recommends that "Each man must find his own way for himself." Psycho-analysis is not far removed from this attitude, since, at a given moment, "the light must dawn." The

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most ancient forms of wisdom all agree that three principles must be observed: "Know whence thou comest, whither thou goest, and to whom thou must render account." Alas, I am chasing after my soul (anima), but it runs much too fast for me. (The idea that I am already dead appeals to me and reassures me. But only superficially; if I were really dead... I would know I was.)

People fall into several categories. There are those who ask themselves questions to which they cannot find answers, and who are resigned to not knowing either where they have come from or where they are going; others who never ask themselves questions, and live contentedly, perhaps because they have found the answer unconsciously; others again, who ask themselves the question and have discovered, and are in possession of, an answer; finally, there are those who ask themselves the question and find no answer. This is the category I belong to. At my age, it is much too late to hope for a solution. What am I doing here? The problem baffles me.

Of course, people will say that my uneasiness is due to the fact that I am separated from myself. The theoretical explanation is well known to anyone who has dipped into books on psycho-analysis, particularly of the Jungian kind. Unappeasable separation from the mother. Unappeasable separation from the feminine soul (anima), from the earth, from death. I therefore project the self, my self, into the non-self, out of which I create a self, a rapacious, petty self, and this withdraws from the non-self, which is a profound self that I refuse to accept as such. I must get to the point of feeling—not merely of understanding abstractly—that death is my self, and that the non-self is my essential, true self. Here again, it seems to me, there is a link with Oriental thought; the non-self which is my self must be the same as the "atman."

How can I get round the difficulty, how can I scale the immense wall which appears in my dreams, or cause it to collapse? How can I remove the barrier which has placed me—which has placed us—in this predicament? Just look at them all: sometimes they want to live, sometimes they want to die; sometimes they nurse each other back to health, sometimes they kill each other. People don't know what they want.

I GO ROUND and round in my cage, behind the bars, like a wild animal.

I DREAMT I was walking in a huge park. Around the park were white houses, from the windows of which people stared at me unkindly; at the far end of the park was a small inn. A waiter was standing about, and I asked him for something to drink. He replied: "I cannot give you a drink unless you produce your certificate of mental health." "Why?" I asked. "If everyone had to produce a certificate of that kind, you would never serve a drink to anyone." "It's different in your case," the waiter replied. "They say you are mad. You have been given injections. You are drugged." I explained that a doctor had given me the injections in order to dull the sensation of anxiety, but I was unable to convince him and eventually went away. I tried to smoke. None of my cigarettes would stay alight; they had holes in them, which let in the air. I threw them all away, one after the other. I retraced my steps, perhaps with the intention of buying more cigarettes. Both the waiter and his kiosk had disappeared. In their place was a small hole. I stamped violently with my foot on the spot where the waiter had been, as if I were trying to kill him, or drive him away symbolically, or take my revenge on him. I found a tiny inn at another end of the park, among the trees, and wondered if I would be given a drink there. Three or four people were sitting inside. There was also a dark young man, who seemed to look at me in a rather friendly way. I had gone in there too to escape from the unfriendly gaze of the people behind the curtained windows of the white houses. I smiled at the young man, then repressed my smile. Perhaps I was making a mistake; perhaps I only imagined that the young man had a friendly look; it was probably a misunderstanding. The proprietress seemed a decent woman; she answered me politely, went to get a drink and opened a little door, which no doubt led to the back shop where the drinks were kept. She agreed to serve me. I sat down at a table and waited for her to arrive with food and drink. But what sort of food and what sort of drink would she bring? I tried to find out, but all in vain. So I waited; I would soon see, but I kept wondering: what will she bring? I waited and waited, to no purpose, and I was still waiting when the dream ended.

Z. explained to me (what I knew already) that this dream contains signs of an oral obsession. When a baby is upset, it is given the breast and its distress abates. Eating and drinking are oral obsessions. It is well known that heavy

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eaters and drinkers are often neurotics or near-neurotics. To want to eat and drink and not to be able to is just another way of being separated from the mother. The fact that I know this is not much help. In any case, the food I am hungry for and the drink I am thirsting for are no longer the food and drink of childhood. Knowledge is what I hunger and thirst for. If I really knew what I was hungering and thirsting for, things would sort themselves out. As in my dreams, I continue to wait in vain. The irritating things about these dreams is that they only rub my nose in what I already know. There is no need to dream to discover the reasons for my anxiety; they are only too conscious. I have learned nothing; I have not advanced beyond what I already knew. My dreams are too clear. There are nevertheless two things, two quite small things: I must become absolutely convinced of the fact that the non-self is my self; I must tell myself that I am already dead and that this state is not really too bad after all.

I PREFER Jung to Freud. Jung doesn't ban religion. As is well known, he maintains that it is a psychological need, and that, being a need, it corresponds to a truth. What truth? Is religion itself a symbol of something else, does it hide something else? That is not what I mean. I dare not, am not bold enough to believe.

IS IT REALLY true that Freudian analysis does not pass judgment, moral judgment? However, psycho-analysis tries to liberate us. This means that it does pass judgment, for what are we trying to free ourselves from, if not from evil, evil being the fetters which bind us? The Zen Buddhists, when they see a corpse, burst out laughing, which is tantamount to passing a negative judgment on life and death, a judgment on God. To pronounce judgment is to assign something a place on a scale of values. It is, undoubtedly, to have a criterion. Zen Buddhism rejects God as He manifests himself in phenomena; or rather it detaches itself from the manifestation in order, perhaps, to find God beyond, in His non-manifestation. It pronounces judgment on the manifestation, and is for the non-manifestation. In any case, laughing is still a way of struggling against tears, of fighting back sobs, a way of still being involved in sobs; even if we succeed in being stronger than the sobs, to laugh is still to pass judgment, to feel passion. Similarly, Freud, in believing that we are held in bonds, that evil, anxiety and neurosis exist, is pronouncing judgment. The free man is he who does not even know that he is free, who is unaware of the existence of freedom and imprisonment. The free man is not the one who has got beyond good and evil, but the one outside the obsessions of freedom and imprisonment. To desire to have no desires is still to experience a desire—that particular one, precisely. Free, not even free, not even not free, is the man who lives haphazardly, who neither consents nor refuses to die, for whom living and dying are the same thing.

Cease to think, empty the mind of thought: alas! animals think too, they too are afraid and fear death. We cannot but hunger and thirst. What is the purpose of creation?

I OUGHT TO HAVE HAD this desperate eagerness for self-knowledge, for knowledge in general, when I was younger. If I had begun earlier, I might have got somewhere. Instead of just being a writer. What a waste of time and effort! I thought I had all the time in the world. Now the situation is urgent; this is my last chance, and the urgency is not conducive to the search for truth; actually, it is through being involved in literature that I am no longer able to understand anything at all. It is as if, through becoming involved in literature, I had used up all possible symbols without really penetrating their meaning. They no longer have any vital significance for me. Words have killed images or are concealing them. A civilisation of words is a civilisation distraught. Words create confusion. Words are not the word.[2]

But these words were like masks, or else they are like dead leaves which have dropped to the ground. The tree of life stands there, bare and black. Henceforth, nothing can mask the most profound, the most incurable distress.

FACING THE TRUTH. I spent Christmas in a northern country, where the festival is celebrated by family gatherings around the Christmas-tree. The people are in festive mood, all dressed in their party best, in a house festively decorated for the season. They exchange gifts and laugh, as if things were getting steadily better, as if

[2] *Les mots ne sont pas la parole:* this presumably means that individual, isolated words do not constitute coherent speech. (Tr.)

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they were unaware of the existence of the abyss. They smile at each other; they are nice, pleasant, and polite.... They embrace, as if they all adored each other. Yet they know what lies in store for them. They pretend not to know. What courage they have, what patience. How ignorant they are, or how wise, or perhaps they secretly, subconsciously, know what I don't know, all that I have never managed to get to know.

I COME BACK to the image of the grey, sombre, unscalable wall of the church. How terse, complex and meaningful, such images are, and how hard it is for words to translate their living thoughts! In this case, I felt a passionate and urgent need to climb over the wall, and at the same time I felt I would never be able to scale it. Was there a little door at the bottom to the right? I think there was, but if so, it was certainly shut. The wall is therefore a prison wall, my prison; it is death, since it looks like a cemetery when seen from a distance; it is a church wall, it divides me from a community: it is therefore an expression of my solitude, of non-interpretation; I cannot get through to others, and they cannot get through to me. At the same time, it is the obstacle preventing knowledge; it is that which conceals life and truth. In short, what I am trying to understand is the mystery of life and death—no more, no less. It is quite normal that such an undertaking should strike me as impossible. But here again I am only dreaming about what I think of when I am awake, and the image is no more than a summary, a visual summary, of the impossibility.

I have the feeling that when I reflect on the image, I discover something which, without being original in relation to my normal thought, is much more precise: why is the ground sombre and covered with withered thistles? Because it is dead ground. Why is the sky so sombre? Why is the sky not blue between the pillars of the dome rising above the church to the right? Why, after walking round the church and passing through the filthy kitchen, did we find ourselves on a slope that was also dark and barren? Because it was an extinct world where there was neither terrestrial fire nor fertility nor, on the other hand, any light in the sky. It is the image of a world, my world, in which the earth is cut off from the sky; a soul, my soul, in which the earth is cut off from the sky, with all that this implies: myself cut off from myself, since my innermost being is no longer feeding my mind. What is the use of knowing all this, since I am cut off by the impenetrable wall and do not know what constitutes the wall? I am just going round in circles; my problems have the same intolerable presence, and their solution is hidden.

IN THE PAST, I sometimes used to have dreams of ecstatic well-being. They were coloured dreams, and one in particular goes a long way back. I was walking in a green forest, tramping through high grass; the light was streaming through the branches of the trees, and at the far end of the forest was a bright glade. That was all, apart from a feeling of indescribable joy. If, at that time, I had paid any attention to my dreams, if I had tried to get to the bottom of this dream, or rather if I had tried to live in accordance with it, things might perhaps not have come to their present pass. Yes, it was exactly that: heaven and earth were intermingled, were infusing some life-giving sap into each other and into me. Alas, what that earth or that light was, I still do not know, that is, still cannot feel.

THE WALL also expresses my insuperable limitations as a human being. I do not belong here; I belong elsewhere: the problem is how to find my way back to that other region beyond the walls: this again leads to commonplace speculations. We are all obviously limited by our individuality: this we all know. Finiteness disgusts us; either that, or we acknowledge it and accept it. What is perhaps less commonplace is the extreme suffering my limitations cause me: I am not immortal, I cannot know everything, I cannot be, and be aware, in all places and on an infinite scale. If I cannot resign myself to such finiteness, if it appears to me in my nightmares in the form of a wall, if it becomes a neurosis, then this is no longer commonplace. That, perhaps, is what is wrong. Since the wall cannot be scaled, I must accept it. Not to accept it is the "diabolical" thing. In that case, the wall must hold. It must only collapse if it cuts me in two. Paradise is perfect adherence. Consequently, there can be no paradise. So what must one do? Have confidence. This is what all the priests and all the wise men tell us. We must have confidence. I tell myself this, but to no purpose.

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R APPEARS in most of my dreams, either as herself or in some other guise, as if she were unwilling to show herself, but I discover her and identify her. There she is, the perfect partner in dialogue, at once myself and another facet of myself, sometimes like a shadowy figure, sometimes scolding and critical, sometimes the voice of conscience, sometimes like a formidable adversary. But she is there. She is there in the withered garden, in the square, scolding me as we stand in front of the wall which she thinks is ugly; she is with me in the sloping, barren, sombre fields, and under the sky bereft of light. Obviously, she shares my fate, whether I want her to or not, or whatever the degree of my wanting or not wanting. She herself has been saying so for a very long time now, for a very long time indeed. It cannot be otherwise, or everything would disintegrate. Whether through love or possessiveness, she does not try to guide me; she accompanies me, and simply tries to prevent me going astray, to prevent what she considers as going astray. The word independence is misleading; for me, going astray means no longer having her with me. Were she no longer with me, she herself would feel hopelessly distraught and anguished, lost in a chaotic world, a world deprived of its foundations.

FOR WEEKS, it was as if the world were no longer the same, as if a certain subtle, surreptitious change had taken place. As if someone had unscrewed some intricate piece of machinery ever so slightly, in such a way that it was still working as before, and yet not quite as before, if examined by a careful observer. The light in the sky had taken on a different shade, voices and sounds an almost imperceptibly different resonance. A certain, ever so slightly abnormal, discrepancy, as if the same effects were experiencing difficulty and delay in responding to the same causes. As if there were cracks in the walls of a dwelling through which strangeness could infiltrate. A different air, different behaviour, different procedures, and everywhere these imperceptible cracks, these machines with loosened screws spreading what is called madness, like a poison gas which, if it were allowed to infiltrate in sufficiently large quantities into the general structure of things, would blow everything up.

Difficult to describe the sensation. It was not a harsh awareness of unreality, monolithic in its emergence and short-lived like some violent and fleeting attack; not, as it were, an unmistakable unreality, rather the awareness of an incipient reality, more insidious, cautious and wary, yet ready to become all-invading. Things were still the same, and yet they were not quite the same, and yet again they were the same. Not a storm of madness, a breeze.

AN EROTIC DREAM: I was living in the house of a blonde woman, whose identity was unknown to me. She was a society woman because, although naked, she was wearing white gloves. She went out with me in this scant attire (why didn't we stay at her place?) and we walked through the streets looking for a place where we could make love. It was night-time, and we were trying to find some suitable wall, or dark corner, or porch. I never managed to make love, either through impotence, or through lack of time, for on each occasion a policeman's figure would loom into view, obliging us to go off somewhere else. An additional reason for the lack of time was that I had a train to catch and my friend herself was going to drive me to the station in her car. We went back to her house, and I started looking for my room where I had left my luggage. There were a lot of people on the stairs, including her husband, who pointed to the room where my luggage was, saying irritably: "Hurry up, you'll miss your train." I went on looking for my room. I wandered through passages where children kept getting in my way, but couldn't find my room. "Come on," said the lady who suddenly reappeared rather less scantily clad, having put on a hat, "Either take your luggage or don't take it, but the train leaves in ten minutes." "It's too late," I said, "It's too late, and I can't leave without my luggage. I can't leave it behind."

Z. said to me: "What do you think of this dream? How do you interpret it?"

"The police represent conscience, of course. I cannot make love, because at the moment I am in a state of moral impotence. I cannot do what I want to do and, in some obscure way, my moral conscience forbids me to do it. As you see, at the moment all my dreams have to do with failure, sterility and prohibitions. Yet I want to go away, but my luggage prevents me doing so. I insist on having my luggage with me."

"No," Z. replied. "Actually you don't want to be free. Your luggage is an excuse, or a pretext. If you really wanted freedom, you would be prepared to sacrifice your luggage."

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An old man afraid of death. From morning till night he moaned about his impending decease. Every time he saw a funeral go by, he caused a terrible scene in his family with his cries of anguish and despair. This went on until one day, when yet another funeral procession was going by, one of his nephews had the bright idea of telling him that the dead person was only sixteen years old. On each occasion after that he asked whose funeral it was, and was regularly informed that the deceased was a young girl eighteen years old. This went on until he became convinced that only young people died. Funerals ceased to terrify him and whenever he saw one go past, he would exclaim: "Another eighteen-year-old gone. Ah, these young people don't know how to live! . . ."

Love, that is the libido, the love of life, is not a reassuring love; it is not freely decided upon, there is no spiritual justification for it; only creative love can be justified—that is, paternal love, procreative love, the desire to create beings. This is precisely what divine love is. The desire not to preserve one's own life, but to confer life on others: to give life, if we haven't the right to love ourselves; if it is not right to love ourselves, it is right to love others, not in order to rediscover ourselves in them, but because they are truly different from ourselves. In this way, the world would not be lost.

Snatches of a dream: Michel, a friend of mine, is dead. He has died quietly and with resignation. I can see him laid out on the bed: what I can still recall of the images of the dream is difficult to interpret. Beside him, also laid out, is his valet, who is exactly like him . . . his double, in fact; the double changes into a page of a manuscript note-book. It is also reported to me that the double, or page, died a week before he did. Michel tells me that he will get in touch with me later, and will send me a message bearing the number 139.

I am thinking again of the dream in which the huge wall appeared. A wailing wall, a wall of separation. Suddenly, I tell myself that I ought to make the wall disappear. If I managed to dream about it again, that is what I would try to do. I could try to do it while I was still dreaming, try to concentrate on the mental image and destroy the wall in my imagination. My hope is that, if I really succeeded, something new would occur, something unexpected. Perhaps the sky would clear, the withered thistles bloom again, the barren earth once again be covered with green vegetation.

As a matter of fact, when I lay down to have my after-dinner nap, my intention was to accomplish this imaginary feat, but I fell into a deep sleep and dreamed of something quite different. A woman was complaining that her husband drank too much and that, when drunk, he became violent; as it happened, he was busy drinking in an adjoining room, the door of which was shut.

The woman showed me a half-empty whisky bottle, which he had broken into by knocking off the top. The door opened and the man appeared. He was middle-aged, had a little moustache, was of average height and rather thin, and yet his hands were enormous. "Why are you interfering?" he asked me. I answered him sharply, accusing him of behaving badly. I don't remember whether he started the fight or I did. I felt that he was very strong. Then I woke up.

My interpretation is as follows: the man in my dream was a man I had just caught a glimpse of a few hours earlier and to whom I had taken a strong and instant dislike. As it happened, I had seen him at the hospital I was attending, and he was thin, middle-aged and with a moustache, exactly like the man in the dream. He had a very loud voice, too loud for a man of his build. I had taken a dislike to him because I had overheard him telling someone that all his organs were healthy, that he kept himself fit by doing physical exercises, so that he could "have a bit of fun" and not end up as an old dodderer. When I heard him mention physical exercises, I was immediately reminded of the old Chinaman in Hongkong, whom I used to watch from the window of my hotel doing exercises on his balcony about seven o'clock every morning, before going to work. It was as if he were an insect, a fly among millions of other flies, cleaning its wings. (Incidentally, why is there such a campaign against flies in China? Ostensibly for health reasons, no doubt, but also perhaps because the Chinese, being as numerous as flies, want to have the feeling that they are not flies?) The man's strong hands were not his own; they were the hands of my masseur. Therefore, I think I know who the man was that I was fighting with: myself, obviously. It was almost impossible to get the better of him, just as I can't get the better of

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myself—that self which another self is trying in vain to beat.

WHATEVER I DO in this world; whether I upset it or transform it, *i.e.*, have the impression of transforming it, or at least of making use of it, whether or not I travel to other planets, it is still "that," and what is "that"? Nothing is more powerful than my sense of wonderment at the fact that it is "that" and that I happen to be here. Even if I succeeded in opening all doors, there would still always remain the door which cannot be opened, the door of wonderment.

This problem, which I know to be insoluble, fills me with mortal weariness. It, too, is the wall. What is the meaning of being here, what is the meaning of being, and why should one continuously go on being? Why is there being? Suddenly, a faint glimmer of mad hope: someone has bestowed the gift of life on us, that "someone" cannot take it away from us again. I am not too sure what this means. I don't know at all what it means.

YEARS AGO, when I was an adolescent, and again a little later, wonderment produced a feeling of euphoria. Let me try once more to describe the experience and my state of mind. I was in a small country town, and must have been about eighteen years old. It was on a fine morning, just a little before midday. A morning in June, early June. I was walking past the low, white houses of the little town. What happened was quite unexpected. Suddenly the town was transformed. Everything at once became intensely real and intensely unreal. Yes, that's it: unreality merged with reality, so that the two became closely, indissolubly, interwoven. The houses became whiter still, and very clean. There was something quite strange in the light, something virginal in the light, an unknown world with which I seemed to be eternally acquainted. A world which the light was both dissolving and restoring to us. A feeling of joy, it too, warm and luminous, as it were, welled out from the depths of my being, an absolute presence, a presence; I told myself that this was truth, although I would not have known how to define this truth. Had I tried to define it, it would no doubt have vanished. I also told myself that, since the phenomenon had occurred, since I had actually experienced it and now knew everything, although I did not know what it was that I knew, I would never again be unhappy, because I had just discovered that we do not die. I had only to remember such moments for all future worries and anguish to be overcome. I had had a revelation of essential truth; everything else was non-essential. It is true that, for several years, I was often comforted by the memory of the experience. Then it consoled me less and less. Finally, not at all. When I try to recall the feeling of happiness, I see only images that no longer have any relationship with myself, impenetrable, not altogether incomprehensible images, but unrelivable. They are no more than pictures on a cinema-screen.

When I described the experience to Z., he said it was an absolutely typical phenomenon. It is what is known as a *satori*, an illumination. He was surprised that the phenomenon had lost its strength and that the memory of it was powerless to sustain me. His advice was that I should try to think about it intensively.

Illumination is the right word for it; it was something which actually took place in light. Very probably the experience was not complete. Something must have been missing. I thought I had experienced essential truth, but the essence of spiritual truth had been absent.

However, there is a link between euphoria, whether it occurs in dreams or in the waking state, and colours, vegetation, and brilliant light, *e.g.*, the oneiric images of vegetation and of sunlight filtering through the green branches of the trees.

I AM CONSTANTLY relapsing into literature. I am gratified at having been able to describe these images, at having expressed them more or less acceptably in words. I think that my account of them may be well written. Perhaps it will please some readers or some critics. In saying this, in saying it to myself, I am relapsing into literature. The fact that I am aware of this does not cheer me up. The fact of being aware of my awareness of the literary nature of my writing only makes things worse. However, I must decide to make my choice: vanity, *i.e.*, the road to failure, or the other thing. We are not always lucky enough to be dealt a crushing blow, we are not always lucky enough to be in a state of hopeless despair, despair about life: I forget about it, I cheer up, I enjoy myself, I amuse myself; I write my "intimate diary." I have enormous vitality. Nothing ever

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exhausts it. Only dreams and nightmares can keep you wide awake. Yet it seems to me that one or two of the preceeding pages had nothing whatever to do with words and literature. Is this because the director of the *Comédie Française* has just telephoned from Paris to say that he is interested in my latest play? It takes very little to restore me to a state of equilibrium in unbalance. I propose to eat an apple.

ACCORDING to the Hasidim, true enthusiasm comes neither from the mind nor from nature, but rather from communion between the two. When you think that the Jews especially were accused of being abstract, of having no sense of the concrete, it can only have been because people knew nothing about them, or were unwilling to learn. Of all people, they have the keenest sense of incarnation. One of the Hasidic rabbis condemned, or severely reprimanded, other rabbis or ordinary worshippers for being too detached from the earth through excessive spirituality, while also at the same time condemning those who were too attached to the earth: truth and plenitude can result only from the marriage of heaven and earth. Through following this way, we come to realise that the manifested forms, or life, are not to be despised and that the world, or creation, is not to be lightly dismissed, because none of it will be lost. According to the same Hasidic tradition, the earth must ascend to heaven. This is what present-day psychotherapists, using a different, though not very different, language, are saying when they state that psychic disorders are caused by a divorce between the two elements, intuition and sensation. A sense of incarnation is also to be found among Christians, notably in Péguy, who thinks and hopes that everything which has been part of existence will be "salvaged" by eternity....

One of the tales of the Hasidim runs as follows:

> Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezritsch once begged Heaven to show him a man whose every limb and every fibre was holy. Then they showed him the form of the Baalchem-tov, and it was all of fire. There was no shred of substance in it: it was nothing but flame. (See Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, I, p. 49, Schocken Books, New York.)

In Arseniev's book on the Orthodox Church, there is an account of a monk who would place his hands on the shoulders of a worshipper or a penitent or someone in a state of neurotic anxiety, as we would say to-day, and give the person the feeling of being surrounded by a great light. There are also the illuminations of St. John of the Cross, the Hesychasts, the Neo-Platonists, Plotinus, and all the mystics. There is Moses' bush and Jupiter's fire. Alas! it is not enough to talk about these experiences; it is not enough to have heard of them. For those who do not actually feel the light, it is no more than a pathetic, paltry, "literary" phenomenon.

THE QUESTION IS: are we unique beings, in other words, immortal, because what has existed only once continues to be for ever, or are we merely the receptacle of anonymous forces which combine and interweave within us, only to fall apart again and disperse? The second alternative is the one materialists believe in; the unfortunate thing is that even metaphysical systems and religions incline towards it. Only Judaism and Christianity have the courage to believe in personalist doctrines.

RELIGION tells us to increase and multiply. At the same time, intercourse is not looked upon with favour, since it is severely regulated. Saint Paul even said that only those who find it impossible to control their sexual appetites should marry, sexuality outside marriage being, of course, out of the question. We must pray for our daily bread and wine is holy, but we must not be gluttons for food and we must not drink too much. The world is an Epiphany, a glorious manifestation of the divinity; yet in order to win salvation, we must detach ourselves from the tangible world. How can we reconcile this perpetual assertion of life with its perpetual denial? Should we perhaps see here an expression of the incessant struggle between the urge to life and the death wish? Difficult to strike a balance between the two instincts. Morality which determines what prohibitions to impose, tries to achieve the balance by means of coercion from without. This moral system or morality, this attempt to control sexuality, sensuality and eroticism, is particularly significant in that it has always existed among Jews and Christians alike in bourgeois society and is found, in a still more rigid form, in present-day Soviet society. Revolutionaries rebel against bourgeois morality which, as they rightly say, has ceased to have any significance, since it is no longer based on any metaphysical beliefs and no one any longer has any idea how

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it came into being or what the point of it is. Nevertheless, through some strange paradox, and under various pretexts which are no more than alibis, bourgeois morality is re-established more forcibly than ever, in the name of socialism, for instance, and is all the more bourgeois in that it takes the form of a reaction against the breakdown of bourgeois morality.

A SINGLE WORD may put you on the right road, a second causes misgivings, a third fills you with panic. After the fourth, you are in a state of total confusion. The logos used to include action. It has now become paralysis. What is a word? Everything that is not experienced with burning intensity. When I ask: is life worth dying for? this is just a verbal formulation. But at least it is comic. Everyone must have noticed how much young Sorbonnites, *normaliens,* essayists, distinguished journalists, rhetoricians, and other wealthy and progressive intellectuals talk about language. It has become an obsession and a mannerism. If people talk so much about language, it is because they are obsessed by what they lack. In the days of the Tower of Babel also, people must have talked a great deal about language, almost as much as they do today. The Word has become wordy. Everyone wants to have his say.

The word no longer points the way. The word is idle chatter, mere literature or escapism. The word prevents silence from speaking. The word deafens. Instead of being action, it consoles you as best it can for failing to act. The word exhausts and damages thought. Silence is golden. Silence ought to stand as a guarantee for the word. Alas! language is suffering from inflation, which again is just a word. What a civilisation! My anxiety only has to ease and I begin to talk, instead of trying to grasp reality, my reality, all realities; the word ceases to be an instrument of investigation. I know nothing at all and yet I teach. I, too, have to have my say.

[3] I have just re-read the last sentence, and see that I have said that art is a grey gleam tossed like a cork on the waves. It is too good to be true. If I had tried to invent a sentence like that, I wouldn't have succeeded. We only have to relax our attention for a moment and all the metaphors we harbour within us rush to the surface and intermingle, so that all levels of perception overlap to produce a comic effect. An illumination dissolved in a welter of colour, or a gleam lost in a sea of words—these are worth remembering. They say it does you good to laugh.

ALL WAYS are right ways. At any rate, all are known, all have been analysed and explained: they have been set out in front of us, like pastries on a tray. Each of us is free to live for himself, since each individual is as good as any other, and I have as much right as anyone to get what I can out of life—with all the risks, of course, that this entails, for although we feel entitled to abandon others, we do not readily accept the idea that others may abandon us; or we can renounce the self and live only for others, devoting our lives to the happiness of others; or we can be totally indifferent, ask nothing of other people, ask nothing of ourselves and live in a state of neutral wisdom; or we can live haphazardly, as circumstances dictate, while ceasing to ask ourselves any questions whatever; or, if we cannot bear to go on living, we can commit suicide. All these courses are equally valid. The main thing is to pursue one particular course all the way through. We must choose one only. For my part, I choose them all, but since I cannot pursue them all simultaneously, I adopt only one at a time, and then of course almost immediately change my mind and choose another, then a third, and so on, with the result that I am in a state of perplexity. Fortunately or unfortunately, I am a writer and can blather away about all this, as if I were sitting at a table in a *café* or *brasserie.*

IT CANNOT be said that art is devoid of all spiritual value. In the last analysis, the artist is superior to the average man, to the technician or the politician, *i.e.* to those people who are ignorant of the nature of their actions. Yet even he doesn't amount to much. Art brings no revelation. It is true that Arthur Rimbaud called his book *Les Illuminations,* and that the critics have claimed that he was a seer, but I don't believe in his powers of second-sight or in any other instances of literary second-sight. I don't for one moment believe that he had any revelation. The most that art provides is a tiny gleam, a very tiny gleam, a tiny gleam of grey light, the merest beginning of an illumination lost in a sea of words, dissolved in a welter of colour, tossed like a cork on the waves and wavering indefiniteness of music.[3]

The fact is that words say nothing, if I may put it this way. At best, some unexpected gesture, an image, an incident, a word which comes to us out of the blue, can plunge us into the ineffable. It is immaterial whether I express myself with scrupulous exactness or not, whether

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the metaphor is apt or inadequate, or carried along on an involved and frenzied flow of words; in any case, the spiritual essence is lost in the explanations. There are no words for the deepest experience. The more I try to explain myself, the less I understand myself. Of course, not everything is unsayable in words, only the living truth. Words render exactly only that which can be said—as has long been known and accepted. Not merely accepted, but also challenged and held to be unacceptable. But if it has been known for so long and so often repeated and if we have never got beyond it, what I say is right.

THE SALVATION OF NATURE: in this, perhaps, lies the superiority of Western religious thought over Oriental metaphysical systems and modern philosophies. For Orientals, phenomena are mere appearances, phenomena are nothing and are to be denied. For modern minds, phenomena, *i.e.*, existence, are everything; there is nothing behind them. According to Mediterranean and European religious thought, the divine spirit reveals itself in nature, which it endows with reality, *i.e.*, Being.

Freedom of divine love. Generosity. The world is real, "exists," is made immortal.

IF YOU ANALYSE the mechanism of anxiety, anxiety disappears. To elucidate the causes of anxiety is to take it to pieces. Analyse the mechanism of desire, and desire is wiped out. As we know, this is what Buddhism aims to do. This is also what present-day psychotherapy aims to do, although it is unwilling to admit it.

Z. reminds me that we are not living in Paradise and that the most we can do is to find some way of tolerating what, for some people, for me, is intolerable. This I already knew; we all know it. It is all very unfortunate. I am trying to get back to Paradise. How else can we live, except paradisally? It is unthinkable that we should live otherwise. I will settle only for a secure and permanent establishment.

TO COME BACK to the contemporary crisis in language: as a matter of fact, there is no language crisis. I mean that, in one sense, it does not exist. Incommunicability is not a problem between me and myself. Socially speaking, everything is communicable. What Barthes thinks he cannot communicate to M. J.-J. Gautier, what M. J.-J. Gautier is said to think he cannot communicate to M. Guy Dumur, the assertion that there is no common language, all that is sheer nonsense. Propaganda confuses the issue, there are deliberate, or sometimes involuntary, misunderstandings, but these can all very easily be cleared up, if each individual is honestly prepared to define the terms he is using more accurately, to explain his terminology. People don't want to listen to each other, to understand each other, to accept each other. They absolutely refuse to do so. Yet the clear, precise words of the French language are available for the expression of what there is to say. People deliberately conceal their thought in the very process of revealing it; this sounds like a contradiction, but everything is so contradictory. In Molière's day—and Molière was neither a fool nor the second-rate mind endowed only with commonsense that he is nowadays said to be—pedantry and preciosity distorted comprehension. But the *précieux* deliberately tried to create an incomprehensible language; they wanted to be different from other people. Today, too, the separation is intentional. People no longer want to understand; they no longer want to be understood, except in their own camp. However, I even suspect that no one believes in the supposed language crisis. The few existing systems of expression, *i.e.*, the prevailing ideologies and philosophies, hold no secrets for anyone. What there is to be said, can be said. There only remains unsaid—existence not object—that which refuses to be said. The essence. In short, it would be enough to rid the French language of pedantry and ideological propaganda, *i.e.*, of a terminology which deliberately distorts the truth of reality (it is to be seen in the accounts of world events given by the press, as well as in articles or studies which "analyse" facts and "place" them in their strategical/tactical context), and of the deceit practised by politicians. Everything can be clearly expressed, provided it is clearly conceived, and there is no hindrance, and the various truths are not deliberately concealed. Only the truth then remains to be told, only the unsayable to be said. This is impossible. But the non-communicable of those who talk about the language crisis and incommunicability is perfectly communicable.

WHAT A FOOL A. is, what a scoundrel, what a rotter! It might be said of anyone that he is a fool, a scoundrel and a rotter;

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of everyone or of no one. Behind every form of perversity or every sort of covetousness, in the heart of every murderer, behind what appears to be jealousy, treachery and cowardice, sometimes even more so than behind all the various kinds of virtue and loyalty, there is a quest, a yearning for the absolute, a nameless longing.

THEY ARE LIKE stupid, insensitive, savage birds. A universe of savage birds. This is how I myself appear to them, what I am for them. Sometimes the hidden monstrousness is revealed, bursts forth, and our monstrous and infernal depths are disclosed. Efforts have been made to exorcise and discover the sources of hatred, but in vain. How could we ever rid ourselves of this hell? I frighten myself, and each new face fills me with panic: what hell, what kind of hell, lies beneath the surface?

What we know of a man is, in the first place, his politeness, his discretion. We should not try to go beyond, on pain of plunging into the abyss. You, who are all dressed up in your Sunday best, tell me whom you have killed, at least in imagination. And you, my pretty miss, how many people have you wanted to kill? How many more do you still want to kill? Would you like me to offer my services for the destruction of those lives that stand in your way? ... Since the world is not a paradise, it can only be a hell, unless desires were abolished. Where there is desire, there is frustration and dissatisfaction, hell. Who is there who doesn't want everything, even if he doesn't know that he wants everything? The world doesn't belong to me; nothing, nobody, belongs to us: who has the wisdom to accept this wholeheartedly and to resign himself to possessing nothing? I dream of athletes saying to each other, after the starting-pistol has been fired: "After you, Sir. Please go first." "Certainly not. After you...."

But the visible object of the race is not the true object. Anyone who wants to be first (and who doesn't want to be first?) is a rotter. But the true object, which is concealed from us by the apparent object, the thing we desire beyond desire and in spite of desire, justifies our existence, redeems us (not morally, for what is morality?), because the true object testifies to the fact that we have actually gone beyond our limitations.

I FIND life painful. Like all neurotics, I cling to my neurosis, I have grown accustomed to it, I have an affection for it. I don't want to be cured. This accounts for the uncontrollable terror, the panic, which descends upon me at nightfall.

AN URGE to kill old men. Old men are revolting. Young men are second-rate and stupid. I have always hated the young, and especially when I was young myself. The way in which the intellectual mentors of the young toady to them to get more disciples is one of the most distressing things I know. How undignified, despicable, meaningless!

WE HAVE the past behind us and the future ahead of us. We cannot see the future, but we see the past. This is strange, considering that our eyes are not at the backs of our heads. I am alive. It is warm in the room. The light is on. I take up a book. When I am too afraid, I bury myself in the immediate present. A precarious retreat.

THE AGGRESSIVENESS of the young. And the old hang on. Aggressiveness demands as much energy as hanging on—perhaps hanging on requires more.

I HAVE an active imagination. Lying awake in bed, I saw the wall of my dream once again. There it was. Amongst other things, it symbolised my separation from myself. It also symbolised what separates me from the truth, or from a more exact and extensive knowledge of it. I must find out what lies behind. The little, closed door was still there on the right. I went up to the door and looked through the key-hole: I saw an eye spying on me. I stepped back. I went up and looked again. A jet of water spurted right into my face and into my eyes. I moved back. I went to look a third time, and almost before I could step aside, an arrow was shot through the hole and vanished behind me, into the darkness of one of the ruined houses behind me, which looked like a rotten tooth.

A second, a third and a fourth black arrow came through the same hole. I moved away from the door and took up my position again opposite the wall in the withered garden; this time, R. was on my left; on my right, more arrows whizzed threateningly past. I knew they would not touch me but were a warning that I should not go back to the door. But what if I made a frontal attack on the wall? I rushed forward and, to my surprise, made quite a big

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hole. I looked inside and could see nothing but blackness, chaos. I stared and peered into the darkness. Within the over-all blackness, I could see tiny whitish specks. I said to myself that they must be germs. Despite a certain feeling of anxiety, I climbed through the gap in the wall and found myself alone in the darkness. I grew accustomed to it and saw a well, at the bottom of which was a dim light. I went down into the well. When I reached the bottom, I realised it was one of the bathrooms in the hospital, which were also used for massage. As happens after I have had a bath, I found myself lying on a leather couch covered with sheets and towels, wrapped up in blankets like a mummy. There was light in the room, daylight. Above me was the open well. I felt as if I were in a crypt, stretched out like those recumbent statues that can be seen on tombs in cathedral crypts. My blankets were removed; I got dressed and climbed up the well face, where there was now an iron ladder. I saw myself arrive at the first floor of the hospital, then at the second by way of the staircase. I went into Z.'s office and asked him what I should do.

I imagined I was back again in front of the church. I managed to fill in the gap in the wall, but you could see where I had made the hole; the wall was there, but in the middle was a patch that was lighter in colour, where the stones and plaster were new, therefore whiter. I gave up worrying any further about the wall.

From time to time, I experience a feeling of well-being. Is it an effect of solitude or of the strict dieting and the various medicines I am taking to rid my body of its toxins? Actually, I get rid of my toxins by putting them down on paper, in other words, by casting them out from myself. Or is the cause the *isidon* I have been taking for the last ten days and which must be beginning to have an effect. Yet during the night, yesterday evening and again this morning, I was in the depths of despair and anguish. It appears that this kind of depression is caused by the nasty Zurich wind; there must be other winds that induce well-being. It is not philosophy which cures us or makes us ill. We are at the mercy of the winds.

We are all afraid of having made a mess of our lives. That false philosopher with the extremely ugly face and loathsome personality, who has made no contribution to philosophy, since he has merely tried to reconcile Existentialism and Marxism (and who, living as he does in a country where opposition is allowed, has been able to oppose the authorities freely and with impunity, although his action does not even deserve the name of opposition, since it merely corresponds to current tendencies expressive of the petty bourgeois jealousy of the wealthy, powerful bourgeois, a sentiment that the upper-class authorities are quite prepared to tolerate since, on the whole, it flatters their vanity), this great philosopher, I say, who has won wealth, respect, and world-wide fame by the exhibition of his rancorous envy, whereas what he really deserved was contempt, remarks sadly in one of his books on his wasted life.

But another man, who has just come out of prison after serving a twenty-year sentence for political reasons and who, for seven of the twenty years, was never allowed to leave his cell, *i.e.*, lived in absolute solitude, does not complain about his life having been a failure. He is sixty-two years old, hale and hearty, and looks younger than before; he feels he has had a full life and now, into the bargain, has the impression of starting afresh. He was not allowed either to read or write and this enabled him to develop his memory very considerably. Being a mathematician, he worked at mathematical problems and made certain discoveries.

On his release, he telephoned his family and his friends and learned that his mother, his sister and his brother-in-law had died in the interval. Most of his friends had also died, some of them after becoming ministers or well-known writers, and being treated as privileged persons by his country's government. Many of them had concluded before they died that their lives had been failures. However, nothing could affect the happiness of the newly released prisoner, who at once started reading contemporary mathematical reviews and books to find out if his own discoveries coincided with recent mathematical research.

Another man, a musicologist, who had spent fifteen years in prison, also including a few years in solitary confinement, is full of confidence since his release: he is busy writing down the musical compositions he thought out in prison. This man lives in a small village on the plains. He hates no one, he bears no grudge, he never complains about having made a mess of his life. People say there is something saint-

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like about him. Solitary confinement has its advantages. It has been known for a long time that asceticism has a purifying, that is a sobering, calming effect.

Then there is the case of a third man, another citizen of a totalitarian country, who was arrested and condemned to several months' imprisonment for having been caught reading the French newspaper, *Le Monde*. A few months later, it so happened that the country adopted a more liberal régime and even took considerable liberties with regard to its former oppressors. And what should the prisoner see, only a few minutes after his release, but a newspaper kiosk with *Le Monde* on display for anyone to buy! "I should have waited," he said to himself. "This is what comes of insisting on knowing the latest news." The reflection was not prompted by any bitterness either towards others or towards himself. He accepted his fate.

Only people who are not locked up and who believe they are free because they are free to come and go are sour or embittered, full of hatred or envy, dissatisfied and pessimistic. Perhaps because they have not *served their sentence* in all senses of the expression.[4] It seems that only monasteries or prisons can save souls or—to put it in contemporary language—provide effective psychotherapy.

MY ONLY JUSTIFICATION for talking about myself is that I stand apart from myself and discuss myself as if I were someone else, a stranger whose case was likely to interest psychologists and others. I say this, but I wonder whether the justification is not hypocritical; yet perhaps every case, even mine, is interesting. The universe inhabited by any man, or any being, even the ant, can be of absorbing interest. The universe inhabited by each individual is universal.

I HAVE TOO GREAT a belief in the myth of psycho-analysis. Psycho-analysis is a form of truth I overestimate because I don't know enough about it. I haven't achieved a critical attitude towards psycho-analysis. Even if I wanted to have such a critical attitude, at the moment it would be beyond me. In a sense, the myth is an overstatement, an amplification, a generalisation, an "absolutisation" of a certain truth, which is also a certainty. For instance, by exaggerating the truth of psycho-analysis, I am involuntarily turning it into a super-science, which encroaches on other levels of reality and on opposite kinds of truth.

I WAS STANDING at the top of a hill. Down below was a wood or a densely wooded copse. There was a lot of grass but, like the wood and the sky, it was grey; however, there was some vegetation, and the grass was thick and probably moist. (Z. tells me that the presence of vegetation is a good sign.) On top of the hill or mountain was a tiny station and a train with open carriages that I got into. I could not see any other passengers. I lay down in one of the open carriages and the train started to move off slowly down the slope. Far below, at the end of the track—the rails were glistening, presumably because they were wet with rain—I could see a very dark tunnel. I began to feel a kind of anguish. The train continued on its way. Soon we were at the bottom of the slope, very close to the mouth of the tunnel; then the engine entered the tunnel and the carriages followed; my carriage, still open, went into the dark passage. My anguish increased slightly. Then, once I was inside the tunnel, it disappeared. I was surrounded by darkness; no opening either to right or left or above: a dark, semi-circular roof. It was astonishing that my anguish should have disappeared so completely; I had a feeling, not of fear but on the contrary of well-being. There in the darkness, as the train ran slowly on, I felt relaxed, happy, safe, absolutely secure. We came out of the tunnel: a grey light, a tiny house looking like some strange kind of station, and dark vegetation. I woke up.

I had, then, to let myself go downhill, to be stretched out, relaxed, and to overcome the feeling of anxiety. Once the anxiety had been conquered, I found myself in the warm, humid tunnel of security, in the quiet grave, in a state of abandonment and solitude, *i.e.* of separation from people, the world and life. I do not understand why I came out of the tunnel again. As it happened, however, I woke up happy, as if I had been freed from some unfounded anxiety, from groundless fears. The feeling of happiness persisted for at least half an hour after I woke up.

R. AND I were in the street—a street which might have been in Paris but wasn't. It was in

[4] The French phrase for "to serve one's sentence" is *purger sa peine*, which can also be taken to mean, literally, "to purge one's sorrow." The implication is lost in English. (Tr.)

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a town resembling Paris or Zurich, or rather like the streets in the part of Athens below the Acropolis. It was also not unlike the completely imaginary town I sometimes wander through in my dreams. I said to R. that we would soon come to the tram station near the river or stream, which is rather like the Seine, or the lake in Zurich, or again like some other river. We got into the tram, which carried us slowly towards the upper town, high on the mountain-side. It was a sort of tram-car-cum-cable-car. I was familiar with the district, or the town, with its houses perched high up on the mountain-side: it filled me with a feeling of well-being, precisely because it was so high up. The tram-car or train or cable-car travelled along over narrow ridges on which there was room only for the rails. We crossed a bridge no wider than a foot-bridge; we climbed up mountain-sides where trees grew among the houses. We came back down again and found ourselves once more in the lower town. We had decided to have dinner at home; our home was a little hotel where we lived in a small, student's room. We went to look for bread. I entered a baker's shop and picked up half a loaf which I gave to R. I told her I had just met some friends and, on the spur of the moment, had invited them to have dinner with us. Angry protests from R., who reproached me with having issued the invitation without thinking. "We haven't enough bread," she said, "and the bakers' shops must be shut by now." The argument developed into a quarrel; I tried to calm her; I told her to go into the hotel while I went to fetch the bread. I took her as far as the lift; when she was behind the lift-gates, we hurled angry reproaches at each other. How could we continue to live together after all we had said to each other? one of us asked. She disappeared from sight. I was filled with remorse and began looking for her, with the fear that I might never find her again. I came to a different house and, although I didn't quite know why, I was sure she was there. Standing in front of the door was the *concierge*, a woman, who said: "You cannot come in. There's a cocktail party in progress, but it's not a genuine one. Actually it's a trap set by the Special Police who wanted to round up all the people in order to arrest some of them as hostages. Both R. and you are on their list. Don't come in. Get away from here." Whatever might happen, I couldn't leave R. on her own in the trap. I absolutely had to see her again. I made my way inside, looked for her and found her among the crowd; the Special Police were already there. I took her by the arm and while the police were starting to arrest people after scrutinising them carefully, I managed to get out through a concealed door, still holding R. by the arm. We found ourselves in the street behind the house, along with a few other people who had also escaped. She was sitting on the pavement, then in an open railway-carriage. Would the train move off? If it managed to start before the arrival of the police, who were looking for us, then we would be saved. R. said to me: "I don't care whether they find us or not, whether they let us go or shoot us. I don't care whether I live or die. I love you, you love me," she continued, kissing me. "I shall have known what it is to love, and love is stronger than everything else. I have given everything I had to give, I have achieved all I had to achieve, I shall have known what it is to love. Once you have experienced this, it doesn't matter whether you live or die." I was overjoyed, for at last I knew the truth, I knew the answer. Slowly the train carried us off. We gradually moved further and further away; at first we could still see the house, then it disappeared from sight. We were out of danger. I woke up. A great feeling of happiness which lasted for a quarter of an hour, until I had become re-acclimatised to the waking world and to everyday existence. It cannot be true, I thought, and was again plunged into gloom.

SUPPOSING we did not die. No one would hate anyone any more. No one would ever again be envious of anyone. We would love each other. We could go on indefinitely making a fresh start, and from time to time something would be accomplished. At the hundredth or the thousandth attempt, we would meet with success. The sheer number of the attempts would make this possible. We know that we haven't time to try our luck indefinitely. Hatred is an expression of our anguish, of our lack of time. Jealousy is the expression of our fear of being abandoned, first in life, then in death. In order to complete life's journey, we must go forward hand in hand. And even then . . . ! We are told that every individual needs affection, that we cannot live without affection, that the greatest misfortune is to feel unloved. Every psychologist knows this. Love is the very atmosphere we breathe, our daily bread. Alas, the atmosphere is foul and the bread poisoned.

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WHICH IS THE RIGHT WAY? Indifference, perhaps. It is impossible; since we are here, we cannot but participate; we cannot remain aloof from phenomena, since we are deeply involved in them. Let us decide, then, that the whole thing is a joke and make up our minds to laugh at it. This would be an offence against God and the world. We cannot soar above the world, we cannot be superior to the deity, we cannot look down on the creator, we cannot be more powerful than He is. This would be an aberration. Humour? We cannot reject the world. But to take everything seriously is equally absurd. Serious-mindedness destroys. Serious-mindedness takes sides and distorts. Let us therefore accept life as it comes: but this we are not allowed to do. Suicide is an intolerable defeat, and it is essential that we should be victorious. To say that the world is absurd is just as ridiculous: we are not more intelligent than the laws governing the world. It is absurd to say that everything is absurd. By what criteria are we determining the absurd? If I say that everything is not absurd, I know what is not absurd. Therefore the absurd cannot be said to exist. "Commit" oneself? This is to take the part for the whole, and therefore to be in the wrong, to be mistaken. Let us accept life as it is, but to say what it is is again to pronounce judgment, and I cannot but be mistaken, since the human intelligence is limited. Let us live in detail; let us do this, rather than that: but then I am isolated, split into fragments, separated from myself, alienated. Be a tree: I am not a tree. Live in accordance with the trend of history, I mean, in accordance with the cosmic process. Nobody knows exactly what this means. To make suppositions is not to choose with any certainty. The Pascalian wager? To place a bet, you have to know whom you are backing, and whom or what you are betting against. I am without the necessary information. Still, we must make ourselves feel at home here, somehow. But I can't, since it is living which causes my uneasiness, and living means living in a state of anxiety. I cannot even affirm this, because I don't know the sources of the anxiety, I don't know what it is I am referring to as anxiety. Anxiety is ignorance: non-anxiety is also ignorance. Nor can I say that I know nothing, because I don't know what "know" means, and I don't know what "means" means. I have a feeling that I am going round in circles. Perhaps I am not going round in circles. Perhaps there are no circles. I can neither laugh, nor weep, nor sit down, nor lie down, nor get up, nor refrain from desire, nor desire, for what do we desire or what do we not desire? I am paralysed. I cannot move. And yet, if I am not mistaken, I do move.

I also have a feeling that someone, a kind of supreme consciousness, must be having a good laugh at us. Perhaps the consciousness is not laughing. I have a feeling that I don't have a feeling; I don't have a feeling that I have a feeling.

Translated by John Weightman

Poem

It is the skeleton
of an elm
across the lion's mane
hill, and a window;

from the barrens

one cold yellow light
in a stretcher of sky.

(on top sleeps a sparrow with
his little black bib)

Hobart Myers

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Robert McKenzie

Between Two Elections (II)

The Conservative Leadership

BY FAR the most important development within the Conservative Party after the 1964 election was the adoption by the Party of a new procedure for selecting its Leader which was used for the first time following the retirement of Sir Alec Douglas-Home in July 1965.

For almost a century since the rise of the modern Conservative Party under Disraeli, the Conservatives had a very nearly unique system for selecting their Leaders. On the death or retirement of an incumbent, the name of a new prospective Leader had invariably "emerged" as a result of informal "soundings" conducted in all sections of the Party by certain of its senior figures. Subsequently, after he had been called to the office of Prime Minister, the new Leader had invariably been unanimously elected at a Party meeting attended by Conservative M.P.s and prospective candidates, peers, and members of the Executive of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations.[1] Thus supreme power within the Conservative Party had passed from one leading politician to another on some nine occasions from the death of Disraeli in 1881 until the emergence of Sir Alec Douglas-Home in 1963, without a single electoral contest. Why then did the Party drop this procedure in 1965 and adopt a formal electoral process?

A considerable part of the explanation lies in the fact that the system, which in the past had aroused little public comment and almost no open criticism from within the Party, had for the first time provoked serious criticism in January 1957 when Macmillan unexpectedly won preferment over R. A. Butler; and it met with a barrage of outright condemnation in the press and from within the Party when Lord Home (subsequently Sir Alec Douglas-Home) "emerged" as Macmillan's successor after a bitter, semi-public quarrel within the Party.

Central to an understanding of these events is the enigmatic figure of R. A. Butler (now Lord Butler). He had been the acknowledged "Number Two" in both the Eden Government (1955–57) and that of Harold Macmillan (1957–63). He had had the widest experience of the high offices of state—apart from Sir Winston Churchill—of anyone in the post-war Conservative Party. If the Party's selection procedure had operated as in the past it might have been expected that he would have succeeded to the Leadership almost as "automatically" as Neville Chamberlain had followed Baldwin in 1937 or Eden had succeeded Churchill in 1955. But for reasons far too complicated to examine here Butler was deeply distrusted by a section (there is no reason to believe it at any time represented the majority) of the Conservative Party in Parliament. When the soundings were conducted under the old system both in 1957 and again 1963, some of Butler's opponents undoubtedly carried their hostility to the point where they were prepared to declare that they would not serve under him as Leader.[2]

ON BOTH OCCASIONS, those conducting the soundings were inevitably deeply concerned to select as the new Leader the man who appeared to

[1] The one exception to this procedure occurred in 1922 when Bonar Law was elected Leader by the Party meeting immediately before he was called to the Palace.

[2] A factor in this distrust was the "appeasement" line which Butler had taken in the Munich crisis of 1938 and again, it has been charged, in the period after the fall of France in May 1940. The Swedish diplomat, Prytz, has recently testified that the message which he sent from London to his government at that time included a report that Butler had told him that the peace offers circulated by Hitler at that time would be "seriously considered" and that "hot-heads in the Cabinet" would be "dealt with. . . ." It must, however, be noted that Butler may deliberately have planted this story with the Swedish ambassador knowing it would reach Berlin and perhaps have the effect of reducing Hitler's sense of urgency about invading Britain.

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have the best chance of re-uniting a badly shaken and deeply divided Party. (On the first occasion the selection occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Suez crisis; on the second the Party's fortunes and morale were at their lowest ebb since 1945.) It was at least arguable, therefore, that the selectors could legitimately take into account not only the numerical strength of the support they found for the possible candidates but also the strength and *intensity* of hostility towards each of them. The second consideration would have a direct and possibly decisive bearing on the capacity of the new Leader to re-unite the Party.

In this situation R. A. Butler was twice passed over in favour first of Macmillan, then of Home; and this gave rise to the view, strongly advanced by some of his friends, and by sections of the Press, that Butler had been in some sense "blackballed," or had been the victim of a conspiracy. It is not without significance that one of Butler's backbench supporters, Humphry Berkeley, was to be the first to raise a demand from within the Party after the 1963 Leadership crisis for the scrapping of the old selection system and the adoption of a formal voting procedure.

THERE WERE other aspects of the transfer of power from Macmillan to Home which helped to ensure the collapse of the old system.[3] The first was the circumstance in which Macmillan announced his intention to retire. His personal stock was desperately low by the autumn of 1963, with opinion polls and by-elections pointing to what seemed a certain Conservative defeat if the Party entered the election under his Leadership,[4] when he suddenly resigned, supposedly for urgent reasons of health, on 9th October, on the eve of the opening of the Party's Annual Conference at Blackpool. Macmillan sent a message to the Conference to be read by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, in which he explained that he could no longer carry the physical burden of leadership. He therefore expressed the hope "that it will soon be possible for the customary processes of consultation to be carried on within the Party about its future Leadership."

The "customary processes of consultation" were, in certain respects, to take a most uncustomary form. This was partly because they began in a unique setting. Although the Conservative Conference, like its Labour counterpart, has no formal voice in the selection of a new Leader, on this occasion it became the arena in which the opening moves took place in the struggle for the succession under the intense glare of the television cameras and in the presence of hundreds of journalists and thousands of Conservative Party activists. Indeed the Conference more closely resembled an American nominating Convention than any previous Conference of any British Party. (Since the style of American politics, as Bagehot once remarked, is "displeasing to the cultivated mind of Europe," this in itself was sufficient to bring the Conservative selection procedure on this occasion into disrepute.)

THE SECOND NOVEL ASPECT of the selection of the new Leader was that for the first time as many as a half-dozen names had been seriously canvassed in the months preceding Macmillan's retirement as possible contenders for the succession. As Iain Macleod has suggested, there is reason to believe that Macmillan originally considered that his successor would be found from a group of three younger members of his Cabinet: Reginald Maudling (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Edward Heath (Lord Privy Seal), and Macleod himself (Leader of the House of Commons and Co-chairman of the Party Organisation). But, as Macleod admits, by the autumn of 1963 none of these three "had emerged with the necessary decisive lead." Then, for a time, Macmillan apparently favoured Lord Hailsham (Minister of Science) during the summer and early autumn of 1963. This was the first modern occasion, with the passage of legislation which made it possible for members of the House of Lords to renounce their peerages, when the Party's leading figures in the Upper House could be considered for the Leadership. And on this count Lord Home, the Foreign Secretary, was also the subject of speculation, although he repeatedly stated that he was

[3] I have given a fuller analysis of these events in the 1964 English edition of *British Political Parties*. The principal printed sources so far available are: Randolph Churchill's *The Fight for the Tory Leadership* (1964), which was prepared with the active collaboration of Harold Macmillan; Iain Macleod's long review of Churchill's book in *The Spectator*, 17th January, 1964, ("Mr. Macmillan's trailer for the screenplay of his memoirs"); an interview reprinted in *The Listener* (19th December, 1963) in which the Party's former Chief Whip, Martin Redmayne, explained in detail the procedure used in conducting the soundings within the Party. One of Macmillan's former ministers, Reginald Bevins, also devotes a chapter in his political memoir *The Greasy Pole* (1965) to the overthrow of his former chief.

[4] Iain Macleod subsequently wrote: "I was, I think, at the end perhaps the only member of Macmillan's Cabinet to hold steadily to the view that the Tory Party would do better under Macmillan's Leadership at the Polls than they would under any possible alternatives"

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"not a candidate."[5] Finally, there was R. A. Butler, the Deputy Prime Minister: although from all accounts it seemed certain that Macmillan from the beginning was strongly opposed to Butler as his successor.

With the situation more fluid than ever before Macmillan decided to formalise the "customary processes of consultation." He realised, according to Randolph Churchill, that the Party was "in a state of disarray" and he was determined

> to put himself in a position so that, if his opinion were asked, he would be able to give advice of a realistic and acceptable character, so as to ensure that the Queen did not have to "shop around" for a successor or for advisers on the succession.[6]

On Monday, October 14th, after the Party Conference had adjourned on the previous Saturday, Macmillan sent a memorandum to his deputy, R. A. Butler, outlining a suggested procedure for conducting the "soundings." This was read to the Cabinet, Churchill claims, and unanimously approved. (None of the dissidents subsequently denied this.) The Lord Chancellor was to collect the views of the Cabinet; the Chief Whip, Martin Redmayne, was to sound the opinion of M.P.s and junior ministers; the Chief Whip in the Lords was to conduct similar enquiries among peers; and senior officials of the Central Office and National Union were to report on the views of the Party outside Parliament.

Four days later Macmillan first received the four reports separately, then brought those responsible for the reports together and asked them to repeat their views in the presence of the others. One of the key figures in this operation, Martin Redmayne, has given a surprisingly full account of the way he, at least, had set about his task. He explained that he first got each of his Area whips to obtain for him "just a simple note of the preference of each M.P., any second or third preference, and any particular objection he might have to any of the known candidates, plus a great deal of other detail, some of it personal, some of it political." In assessing these reports, the Chief Whip explained that he had to start by getting what he called "a numerical guide about what the situation was." But he admitted that a subtle process of weighting then began, presumably to take into account the intensity of feeling for or against the candidates, and the weight and substance of the M.P.s who held particular views. While the Chief Whip denied that a "blackball" system was in operation, he admitted that "one had obviously to think with which [candidate] there would be the least number of dissidents." Redmayne summarised his findings by stating that Lord Home, "although marginally, the leader on first choice, was outstandingly the leader as you took it further through the field." And he added that, "as it happened the various sources of advice in greater or lesser degree came to the same conclusion."

IAIN MACLEOD, while attributing good intentions to all concerned, claimed that "the result of the methods used was contradiction and misrepresentation." He recounted his own calculation as to the division of opinion within the Cabinet and, based on his "personal knowledge" of the first choices of some thirteen Cabinet members, he stated "eleven were for candidates other than Lord Home and two in support." He therefore concluded that even if the remaining "half a dozen" were unanimously for Home he could not have had the majority backing of the Cabinet. Macleod therefore argued that "if the recording of opinions [among the M.P.s, peers, and in the Party Organisation] approached the confusion ... engendered by the method of sounding the Cabinet the margins of error must have been enormous."

The tenor of Macleod's argument curiously suggests that he assumed that the *first* choices of the Cabinet Ministers would (and should) be of decisive importance. Redmayne emphasised, however, that those conducting the operation were seeking what might be called "the highest common factor" of agreement. On this basis, even if Home did not have the largest number of first choices among Ministers, he might, if he had overwhelming "second choice" strength (and faced little outright hostility), be considered to have the "strongest" Cabinet backing. Macleod also seems to have been greatly surprised and exasperated that during the decisive period of the enquiries the Cabinet did not meet (presumably to arrive at a collective judgment as to who should succeed to the Leadership). But with no less than six of its members possible contenders for the succession—including its presiding officer, R. A. Butler—this would have been not only an unprecedented, but very probably an unworkable procedure. After more than a decade in the Cabinet, Macleod appears

[5] No British politician or journalist ever seems to have heard of General Sherman's famous self-abnegatory phrase; or at least no one put it to Home who remained a strong "non-candidate" in the great tradition of American presidential contests.

[6] Randolph Churchill, *The Fight for the Tory Leadership* (Heinemann, 1964). Macmillan's desire to insulate the Queen from Tory Party controversy may have been influenced in part by the fact that she was at the time pregnant.

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to have forgotten that on the occasion of the choice of a new Leader it is the machinery of *Party* and not of *Government* which takes precedence.

But the Macleod version of Home's emergence is most important for the account it gives of the last-minute efforts of the anti-Home forces to come together in support of Butler, late on the Thursday evening before Home was called to the Palace the next day. Of the six possible contenders referred to above, Heath alone actively supported Home; but now, at the last moment, the three remaining possible candidates, Maudling, Hailsham, and Macleod, all agreed to throw their support to the fourth, Butler. The Chief Whip was personally notified of these developments and promised to report them to Macmillan. The rebels met again on the Friday morning, and were on that occasion joined by the candidate on whom they had belatedly agreed, R. A. Butler. But Macmillan, aware of these events, one must assume, pressed on with his plan to recommend Lord Home. He told Home himself, Churchill claims, that "... we can't change our view now. All the troops are on the starting line. Everything is arranged. It will just cause ghastly confusion if we delay."

IN THE EVENT, there was no delay; indeed, quite the reverse. After the Queen had received Macmillan's advice Lord Home was called to the Palace within the hour and with a speed that is unprecedented in recent comparable transfers of power.[1] Home did not immediately kiss hands as Prime Minister until he could explore the prospects of forming a Government. Within twenty-four hours, after an elaborate series of conversations with members of the previous Government, he satisfied himself that he could do so and his appointment as Prime Minister was announced on the morning of 19th October. On 11th November he was unanimously elected Leader of the Party.

THE TEN TEMPESTUOUS days that intervened between the resignation of Macmillan and the appointment of Home as Prime Minister had contributed further to the destruction of one of the long standing assets of the Tory Party: the Party's reputation in the public mind, as shown in the opinion polls, for "greater cohesion and unity" than its rivals. After what to many British eyes seemed an unbelievably sordid public struggle for place in power, it is not surprising that leading Conservatives became convinced that this sort of thing must never be allowed to happen again.

Other factors which contributed to the collapse of the old system must be noted. First was Macmillan's action in encouraging (and indeed assisting) Randolph Churchill in an enterprise which involved publishing a very detailed (and strongly pro-Macmillan) account of the struggle for the succession which was to appear within three months of the transfer of power to Home. Those of Home's rivals who felt they had in some sense been outwitted by Macmillan were very angry. Macleod, who claimed that until then he had intended to remain silent, was provoked into launching his embittered counter-attack on what he called the "magic circle" of Old Etonians who ran the Conservative Party and who had collaborated in producing a new Leader who (in Macleod's view) was so unsuitable to lead the Party and the country that Macleod himself felt that he could not serve in his government. Macleod's "magic circle" phrase, highly misleading though it is, was to enter the language of popular political discussion and undoubtedly proved intensely embarrassing to the Conservatives who were soon to fight an election on the issue of "modernising" Britain.

Quite apart from Macmillan's action in encouraging this bitter intra-party debate was the fact that the system had indeed produced, in Lord Home, a fourteenth Earl, a singularly aristocratic and therefore politically vulnerable figure as Prime Minister and Leader of the Party. There is not the slightest reason to believe that Home was chosen *because* he was an aristocrat. After lengthy discussions with a great many of those concerned I remain convinced

[1] Certain questions of considerable constitutional importance remain to be answered.

Was the Palace aware that Home's strongest rivals had grouped themselves behind Butler? If they were in possession of such information, should they have moved somewhat more slowly, allowing, as on recent comparable occasions, a day to elapse before calling a new Prime Minister? Alternatively, should the Palace have conducted further soundings on its own, if there was strong reason to believe that a group of the most powerful ministers was openly hostile to Home's succession and prepared to support Butler?

It can be argued that whoever advised the Queen to move with almost unprecedented speed on this occasion was thereby helping to prevent the monarchy from getting involved in the internal controversies of the Conservative Party. Alternatively, it can be argued that the advice to move with such unusual speed was a direct intervention in Tory Party politics, since it had the effect of forestalling the anti-Home revolt involving a group of the most powerful Cabinet ministers. Certainly had there been time for reports to spread through the Party of the extent of the anti-Home opposition it would almost certainly have had the effect of exploding the claim of those who had conducted the sounding that Home had the best prospect of "uniting the Party."

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that, however much one may fault their judgment, those who agreed on Home's name were honestly persuaded that he was the most suitable Leader for the Party in the situation it then faced.

As an aristocrat of ancient lineage, Home was in fact a most unrepresentative figure among the ten leaders hitherto produced by the old system since Disraeli. (Only three others, Lord Salisbury, his nephew A. J. Balfour, and Winston Churchill had been of immediate aristocratic lineage. It is worth noting that Churchill was not produced by the old leadership selection system; almost certainly he could not have become leader of the Conservative Party had the country not been on the verge of defeat in war.) Most of the other leaders had either a business background, or were professional politicians, or both.

FINALLY, THERE WAS the fact that, earlier in the year in which Sir Alec was chosen, the Labour Party, using its simple preferential voting procedures (with Labour M.P.s alone taking part), had chosen a new leader, Harold Wilson, with a minimum of public controversy and then had appeared quickly to close its ranks behind him. The contrast in the reactions of the two Parties to the comparable problem of choosing a new Leader was so complete that many Conservative M.P.s undoubtedly became convinced that on this ground alone they must jettison the old system.

It was of decisive importance that Lord Home came to share this view and after the election appointed Lord Blakenham to conduct an enquiry into possible alternative methods of choosing the Leader. In retrospect, Home explained in an interview why he had done this:

> ... there's a lot to be said for the old system; it allowed flexibility. But, of course, once it was thought that the process wasn't entirely open it had to go ... if the change of leadership hadn't happened in the middle of a Party Conference, probably there would have been no need to alter the procedure by which I was selected and later elected. ... [But] we are substituting another which will be readily understood by the public.

Having received favourable support in all quarters for the recommendation, as he reported to the 1922 Committee, Sir Alec announced his adoption of a new electoral procedure at a meeting of the Committee on 25 February 1965.

Shortly thereafter, I asked Sir Alec in an interview whether he would consider submitting himself for election by the new procedure since, by implication, he had now conceded that the process by which he himself had been selected just a year earlier had proved so unsatisfactory that it had to be scrapped. Sir Alec replied that he found no necessity for this whatever, since he was confident that he had the full backing of the Party and had repeatedly announced that he intended to lead the Party into the next election.

Assuming that Sir Alec wanted to continue to lead the Party (and all the indications were that he very eagerly wished to do so), then it was probably a mistake in his own interest not to have run the risk of confirming his own Leadership in this way. (Baldwin had twice sought and obtained confirmation of his leadership at party meetings when he was under fire.) Had he acted quickly, I think it highly improbable that any of his colleagues would at that stage have accepted nomination against him. But in the course of the continual parliamentary duels in which the Leader of the Opposition must engage with the Prime Minister, it was repeatedly demonstrated that Sir Alec was simply no match whatever for Harold Wilson, particularly in the all-important field of domestic economic policy. As had been the case during the General Election, Sir Alec's television appearances were consistently less impressive than were those of the Prime Minister. To add to his difficulties the opinion polls relentlessly reported that Sir Alec was markedly less popular with the electorate than was Mr. Wilson (who in fact ran as far ahead of his own Party in popularity as Sir Alec tended to run behind his).

When one keeps in mind the unsentimental toughness with which the Conservative Party has in the past been prepared to destroy its unsuccessful leaders, it was to be expected that Sir Alec would soon be under pressure from some elements in the Party to make way for a new Leader. By the early summer of 1965 this was in fact the case.

THERE WERE, of course, grounds for Sir Alec's supporters to accuse their rebellious colleagues of lack of gratitude. He came within the narrowest possible margin of scoring a victory which would have been almost as sensational as President Truman's defeat of Thomas E. Dewey in 1948. And certainly since the election he had moved perhaps more quickly than any previous Conservative Leader to reorganise the Party and to prepare it for a possible early election. He had appointed Edward Heath to succeed R. A. Butler as Chairman of the Party's Advisory Committee on Policy, which set about re-examining the Party's policies in more than a score of fields. He had appointed a young and aggressive Tory M.P., Edward du Cann, 41, as Chairman of the Party Organisation (the youngest such appointment in forty years.) He had moved Sir Michael Fraser, one of the best minds of the Party, from his post as head of the Research Department to Vice-Chairman of the

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Party Organisation, and appointed a young economist in his early thirties to succeed him. He had named a brilliant young Conservative journalist of 29 to be head of the Conservative Political Centre, and had also reorganised his Shadow Cabinet in a way that gave new responsibility to some of the younger M.P.s. This was certainly a more impressive performance than the Conservatives had put up in the first year after their defeat in 1945. But even this record was not enough to ensure that a united Conservative Party would be prepared to give Sir Alec a second chance to defeat Harold Wilson.

For the first half of 1965 the main basis of Sir Alec's security of tenure was the fact that the Prime Minister might call a General Election at any time, perhaps giving the Opposition no more than the minimum three weeks' notice required by electoral law. But in June Mr. Wilson announced that he had no intention of recommending a dissolution before the end of 1965. This was in no sense a binding commitment, but it did mean that those Conservatives who wanted to get rid of Sir Alec could argue that a successor would have a reasonable opportunity to present himself to the electorate well in advance of an election campaign. Some of the younger supporters of Edward Heath were particularly anxious to force a show-down on the issue. Their man had had the best opportunity of any of Sir Alec's potential successors to demonstrate his qualities over a period of several months during which the lengthy and fiercely-contested Finance Bill had been going through the House of Commons. Heath, and the team he organised around him, had demonstrated great skills in precisely the field in which Harold Wilson excelled and in which Sir Alec, by his own admission, felt completely beyond his depth.

Heath's supporters made an abortive, but very nearly successful move in early July to have the question of the Party's leadership placed formally on the Agenda of the 1922 Committee. A few days later the National Opinion Poll reported the most extensive survey of public attitudes towards the Leaders of the two major Parties which any opinion poll had ever presented. It revealed that the public considered Harold Wilson to be markedly superior to Sir Alec Douglas-Home by almost every conceivable measure of leadership. (The final straw for Sir Alec may have been the discovery that a larger proportion of the electorate thought that Mr. Wilson was "sincere" than thought Sir Alec exhibited this quality.) The opinion poll also indicated that the Conservatives were 4½ points behind the Labour Party (although they had almost broken even in public support at the previous General Election). In addition, the survey reported that 9% of the electorate said that they would be more likely to vote Conservative in the next election it there was a new Conservative Leader, with as many as 21% of the Liberal voters taking this view.

Immediately after the publication of this survey, the *Sunday Times* carried a major article by its Deputy Editor, one of the most influential of Conservative journalists, William Rees-Mogg, in which he called on Sir Alec, as a man of integrity, to resign in the interests of his Party.

> ... it is clear that Sir Alec cannot tell the Nation what it ought to do at a very dark and critical moment. Others may not have the right answer. He does not have an answer at all.... It is hard to resist the very widespread view that the Conservatives, unless after a National disaster, will not now win a General Election while Sir Alec remains their leader.

It is impossible of course to say which, if any, of these factors influenced Sir Alec's thinking about his own future. But on July 22nd, four days after the appearance of the *Sunday Times'* "The Right Moment to Change" and one week after the opinion survey had revealed the strong adverse public judgment of Sir Alec, he abruptly announced to a meeting of the 1922 Committee that he was resigning the Party Leadership.

In explaining his action Sir Alec later remarked "I took the decision and the decision was mine." Then, however, he added the all-important additional words: *"But a lot of people thought that it would be a good thing to change the Leadership at this time...."*—a remark which gave the clearest possible indication that Sir Alec's action was (to what extent one cannot yet judge) influenced by the pressures brought to bear upon him. Had he won the last election his current position would have been unassailable and there would have been no references to "the magic circle" or to Sir Alec's aristocratic origins. Had the opinion polls and other evidence suggested that it was likely that the Party could defeat the Wilson Government under his leadership, his position would have been almost as secure. But a considerable body of his supporters had made it clear to him that they considered him a hindrance to the Party's chances of victory. And whatever the formal powers Sir Alec might in theory wield over his followers, he chose not to try to exercise them but to bow gracefully from the stage.

It remains only to add that the Party's new election machinery worked with speed and precision, following Sir Alec's resignation on 22nd July. Three names were put forward for the

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first ballot among Conservative M.P.s on 27th July. They included Edward Heath (the Party's Shadow Chancellor); Reginald Maudling (Shadow Foreign Secretary) and Enoch Powell (Transport), the latter an admittedly forlorn candidature.[8] The result was as follows: *Heath, 150*; *Maudling, 133*; *Powell, 15*. Heath was well short of the lead required by the rules for a first ballot victory; but he had nonetheless more than a majority of the votes cast and was thus virtually certain of a second ballot victory. Maudling and Powell almost immediately withdrew and Edward Heath was duly elected with the traditional unanimity and with the pledged support of his nearest rival, Reginald Maudling (who seconded his nomination), at the customary Party Meeting on 2nd August.

SINCE EDWARD HEATH had been educated at a grammar school there was some tendency in the press to congratulate the Conservative Party on having discovered the virtue of "careers open to talent." It was generally forgotten that as long ago as 1911 the Party had chosen in Andrew Bonar Law, the son of a poor minister of religion in New Brunswick, Canada, who, after coming to join his relatives in Scotland, had left Glasgow High School at the age of 16. Whether in choosing Bonar Law, or Sir Alec Douglas-Home or, currently, Edward Heath, the Conservatives' main concern would appear to have been to find a man who could unite the Party and lead it to victory. In this, and in disposing of its less successful leaders, it has exhibited a more single-minded consistency than any of its political rivals.

By early October with the publication of *Putting Britain Right Ahead*, Mr. Heath revealed the first fruits of the work of the thirty-six policy groups which had been re-examining party policy. While the document could hardly claim a place of great distinction in the literature of politics, it did place on the agenda for debate between the parties a fair number of fresh ideas. Among the more important were the explicit proposal that Britain should go into Europe at the first favourable opportunity; the commitment to re-write the legislation governing industrial relations to provide for much stricter supervision of trade unions and collective bargaining; the proposal that more of the cost of social welfare should be shifted from the Exchequer to the employers in order, by implication, to facilitate cuts in Income Tax. (Since the employers would no doubt tend to pass these charges on to the consumer the effect would be to transfer the cost of welfare services from direct taxation, which is based on the ability to pay, to indirect taxation which for the most part is not.)

Mr. Heath broke with party tradition in giving a "keynote" speech on the first morning of the Party Conference in October, in which he commended the new policy statement to the Conference. Whereas no previous Conservative leader had ever attended the working sessions of the Party Conference he remained on the platform throughout. After a shaky beginning it was generally agreed that he had consolidated his leadership to considerable effect by the end of the conference.

But in Parliament and in the country he faced a much more exacting task. The Rhodesian crisis which erupted in November placed an enormous strain on the Conservative Party and in a critical vote on 21 December (on the Government's decision to apply oil sanctions) Mr. Heath's authority was dramatically and publicly undermined. He had asked the party to abstain but 80 Conservative M.P.s ignored his advice, 50 voting against the government and 30 for. His position was also damaged by the repeated reports of the two main opinion polls that the Conservatives trailed Labour by a wider margin than they had before Sir Alec had been replaced. And Mr. Heath's own standing with the public had also declined in the months since he became Leader of his Party. In part no doubt this was a by-product of Mr. Wilson's skill in taking advantage of the innumerable opportunities for publicity which are available to a Prime Minister, particularly during a period of crisis. At the end of 1965 the Tories were brooding unhappily over the possibility of defeat in a 1966 election; and Mr. Heath was in grave danger of losing the most important single source of authority for the Leader of any party: the prospect that he will at some reasonably early date dispose of the hundred or more offices in the gift of a Prime Minister when he forms a government.

Mr. Heath, it should be noted, is the first Conservative Leader for over 40 years who did not become Party Leader *and* Prime Minister at virtually the same moment. In such circumstances the new Leader immediately controls the "political life-chances" of his colleagues. A Leader who takes office in Opposition is in a far weaker position; and if he subsequently leads his party to defeat his own chances of survival are likely to be dim indeed.

Because the Conservatives have ruled Britain alone or in coalition for forty of the past fifty

[8] Powell presumably allowed his name to go forward to test the degree of support in the Party for the rather extreme brand of "free-market" economics to which he had been attempting to convert his colleagues. See John Wood (ed.), *A Nation Not Afraid: the Thinking of Enoch Powell* (Batsford, 1965).

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years—and Labour has spent a comparable period in opposition—the illusion was created that the Conservative Leader, *qua* party leader, was a vastly more powerful figure than his Labour opposition number. By the end of 1965, with the Conservatives in opposition and Labour in power, the roles were dramatically reversed. It was Mr. Wilson who seemed the all-powerful figure and Edward Heath the precariously placed party leader struggling to assert authority over factious followers. It is safe to say that if Labour had been in office as continuously as the Conservatives during the last half-century much nonsense about the alleged contrast between the authoritarian structure of the Tory party and the internal democracy of the Labour Party would have remained unwritten.

Retrospect & Prospect

TO BEGIN with an unabashed value judgment: the change of Government in October 1964 undoubtedly contributed in a major way to the good health of the British Party system. Because, in part, of their resilience and political adroitness the Conservatives have found it too easy for too long to win elections and to retain power in Britain. It must be conceded that, under Macmillan in particular, the Conservatives adopted a number of bold policies (including, above all, the decision to apply for full membership of the European Common Market, perhaps the most daring initiative by a Conservative Government since the repeal of the Corn Laws). But it had nonetheless become clear by the early 1960s that Conservative ministers were exhibiting the "accident-proneness" of politicians who had become too confident of the invulnerability of their position. The heavy-handed unimaginativeness of, for example, their attempt to introduce an Incomes Policy suggested that they were getting increasingly out of touch with public opinion.

The performance of Labour during its thirteen years in opposition meanwhile was beginning to lend credence to the theory that, if one party in a preponderantly two-party system is almost continually in opposition (*vide* the Republican Party in the United States), it becomes prey to all manner of delusions about itself, its opponents, and the world around it. Faced with repeated rebuffs from the electorate, the Labour Party had begun to exhibit "withdrawal symptoms." Thus Richard Crossman, M.P., one of the most widely read of the Party's theoreticians —and a perennial member of the Party's National Executive—could declare, following the Party's third successive defeat in 1959, that in the "creeping crisis of the 1960s and 1970s" the leadership of the Labour Party

> . . . should hold itself in reserve, refusing in any way to come to terms with the Affluent Society, warning the electorate of the troubles that lie ahead and explaining why they can only be tackled by ensuring that public enterprise dominates the whole economy . . . the Labour Party may incur a temporary unpopularity, but it will be creating the conditions for gaining the confidence of the electorate when its harsh predictions come true.[9]

Mr. Crossman also added, ironically enough, "a vigorous Socialist Opposition will have far more power for good than a weak Labour Government with a small majority. . . ." But despite the size of its majority the Labour Government in its first year decisively demonstrated its capacity to govern—a capacity which the Party itself had called into question by its interminable quarrels in opposition, by its inability rationally to re-examine its fundamental doctrines and its own structure. It has obviously been a most salutary experience for the Party to have to wrestle in office with the same intractable problems facing Britain at home and abroad which plagued the Conservatives; the Party's more naïve members and supporters have had to come to terms with the fact that these problems cannot be exorcised by the waving of a "Socialist" wand.

But while one might welcome the absence of doctrinaire socialism in the Labour Government's record there is room for concern about the intense conservatism of certain of its policies which were discussed in the first part of this article. Its financial programme, for example, has been so rigidly orthodox that should the Government fall from power in a period of serious economic difficulty it would be all too easy for the old Left to argue that "socialism," as a cure for Britain's economic problems, has never been tried. This could lead in turn to a recrudescence of all the old half-truths, myths, and shibboleths about "betrayal" and "banker's ramps" which bedevilled the Party's thinking during the 1930s.

IN ADDITION serious consequences may flow from the conservatism—in the first year at least —of the Government's defence and foreign policies. With Enoch Powell in his opening performance as Shadow Defence Secretary calling into question Britain's role East of Suez, Labour may soon stand alone as the champion

[9] R. H. S. Crossman, "Labour & the Affluent Society," reprinted in his *Planning for Freedom* (Hamish Hamilton, 1965).

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of a "strong" policy in that area. Then too the Government's complete support for American policy in Viet Nam has unquestionably shocked many of the Party's most active supporters. These considerations, combined with the utter illiberality of the Government's White Paper on immigration, are—in my experience of university audiences at least—causing widespread disillusionment amongst a great many young people who welcomed Labour's election to office. The Party's youth movement is in any case very nearly in ruins; there is a very real danger that Labour will alienate the most idealistic elements in the younger generation of potential supporters. It can be argued on Mr. Wilson's behalf that his defence and foreign policies, along with his proposals on immigration, have given the lie to those who have traditionally charged Labour with insufficient devotion to the national interest. But he may find he has paid a rather high price for achieving this.

These considerations apart, the most important and unanswered question about the present condition of the British party system is whether Labour, as a result of its experience in office, can at last—after forty years as the second great party in the state—achieve a status in the eyes of the British electorate which will enable it consistently to compete for power, on a more or less equal footing, with the traditionally dominant Conservative Party. The Tories have responded to defeat with great alacrity; they have chosen in Edward Heath, whatever his limitations, their one front-bench spokesman who has most clearly demonstrated (on at least two major issues)[10] his willingness to champion policies against powerful prejudices and entrenched interests within the Conservative Party. It therefore seems certain that, whatever else happens, Labour will not win the next election because of the incompetence of the Conservatives or the irrelevance of their policies.

As to whether Labour is likely to respond to the challenge before it, a strong case can be made either way. Labour is among the few Social Democratic Parties which have proved themselves incapable of formally disavowing their commitment to wholesale common ownership, even though this goal is no longer seriously entertained by more than a fraction of the Party's representatives in Parliament. The Party itself is in as urgent need of "modernisation" as the country it governs. False as the impression is, the Party's archaic internal mechanisms still provide the spectacle at the Annual Conference—now televised in full—of senior ministers *appearing* to plead for the approbation of the great barons of the trade union movement, for all the world as if they, rather than the Cabinet, wielded ultimate authority.

But many features of Labour's record in office point, on the other hand, to an optimistic conclusion. Whether one agrees with its judgments or not, the Government has often acted with commendable courage—for example, in cancelling certain highly uneconomic contracts with the British aircraft industry, or in accepting the harsh consequences of their commitment to defend the exchange value of sterling. Some ministers (including, for example, George Brown, the Minister for Economic Affairs, and Ray Gunter, the Minister of Labour) have shown that they are fully aware that a Labour Government must be as ready to insist on the modernisation of the trade unions as to promote the modernisation of management.

If Labour were to fall from power (and to face another five years in opposition) in a way that appeared yet again to call into question its capacity to govern, then the old fissiparous tendencies within the Party might reassert themselves with even greater force. The width of the spectrum of opinion within the Party from the Old Left, represented by M.P.s like Ian Mikardo, to the "revisionists" such as Anthony Crosland (Secretary of State for Education) and Roy Jenkins (Home Secretary), is certainly wider than the gap that separates the latter from those Liberals who share the views of Jo Grimond (or even the Heath wing of the Conservative Party). Many of the younger moderates in the Labour Party agree privately with Mr. Grimond that a realignment of the non-Conservative forces in the country is ultimately inevitable. If, on the other hand, Labour rules with comparative success and, in particular, if it wins the next election, then the continued experience of power may result in a slow and fairly painless metamorphosis. In such a process Labour's image and its traditional policies might be transformed in such a way as to ensure the Party's role as a major and, for a considerable period ahead, a decisive factor in British policies.

[10] The attempt to negotiate British entry into the European Common Market, and his championship of the Bill to abolish retail price fixing (RPM) in the 1964 Parliament.

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The Criticism of Roland Barthes

By Martin Turnell

ROLAND BARTHES is one of the most interesting of the younger French critics and one of the most provocative. He laid the foundations of his reputation with the publication in 1953 of his first book: *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*. The title, which is part label, part aphorism, and part manifesto, might be translated colloquially as "rock bottom in style." The expression occurs in a variety of different contexts in his writings and is a good indication of his approach to criticism. He warns us, in a later essay, against "the crude error of confusing the zero degree of things with their negation."[1] It stands for the attempt to strip literature and ideas of everything that is superfluous, to get down to essentials. It stamps M. Barthes himself as a *radical*. He is an independent but not an isolated figure. He does not belong to any group or movement, but has affinities with Jean-Paul Sartre—he has somewhat disconcertingly expressed warm admiration for the monumentally unreadable treatise on Jean Genet—with the Jean Paulhan of *Les Fleurs de Tarbes* and with Maurice Blanchot. The aim of all these critics has been a radical reassessment of literature. They have tried to get down to "rock bottom" by asking fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of literature and the function of language.

He has also expressed admiration for a number of other critics, Lucien Goldmann, Georges Poulet, Jean-Pierre Richard, Jean Starobinski, and Charles Mauron, who may seem at first to have little in common with the first group or with one another. A closer examination, however, shows that they too have attempted a reassessment of established authors in the light of their particular theories. Goldmann has re-examined Pascal and Racine from a Marxist standpoint and though we may not feel able to accept his conclusions, or all of them, he compels us to look at both writers from a fresh angle. This is equally true of Poulet's theory of time, Richard's concepts of "depth" and "sensation," or Mauron's "psycho-criticism" of Racine to which M. Barthes acknowledges a debt in his own book on the dramatist.[2]

M. Barthes' main preoccupation is language. His terminology is not free from ambiguity, but three distinctions need to be kept in mind. He distinguishes between *langage* meaning primarily the spoken word, the idiom of a society or a group at a given moment in history; *écriture* meaning the written word or literary style in general, and *style* in the sense of personal literary style or what he sometimes refers to disparagingly as "good writing."[3] He has no use for traditional literary theories which treat the writer as an inspired individual expressing his vision of the world in a language which is in a way his own creation. One of his slogans is that "language precedes literature":

> Literature is made with language... with material that *already* contains meaning at the time when literature takes possession of it: literature has to squeeze into a system which does not belong to it, but nevertheless has the same function as literature: communication.

For Barthes "language" is an amalgam of the beliefs, customs, habits, social attitudes and conventions that are current in the writer's milieu. It follows that instead of starting from scratch with a brand new instrument or creating a language of his own, the writer is working with

[1] *Essais critiques* (Paris, 1964) p. 179. Other examples of the use of the expression are: "*degré zéro de l'histoire*," "*degré zéro de la personne*," "*degré zéro de l'anecdote*," "*degré zéro des classements*."

[2] C. Mauron: *L'Inconscient dans l'oeuvre et la vie de Racine* (Gap, 1957). M. Barthes' book on Racine is discussed later in this article.

[3] "The eroric language of Sade has no connotation except that of its century; it is an *écriture*: the connotation of Bataille's language derives from Bataille's own nature; it is a *style*..." (*Essais critiques*, p. 245. Italics mine.)

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materials which already constitute a "system of meaning" and to this extent determine the literature that is in fact produced.

Language, however, does not simply shape or condition or determine literature. It is a form of pressure which creates a tension between the writer and his medium:

> Language and style are blind forces; the act of writing is an act of historical solidarity. Language and style are objects; writing is a function. It is the relation between creation and society; it is language transformed by its social destiny, form grasped in its human intention and linked to the great crises of History.

It is apparent that in Barthes' view literature emerges from the conflict between the writer and his medium, but in spite of the pressures to which the writer is exposed, the act of writing is a form of co-operation, an act of solidarity between the individual and society. This not only introduces a sociological slant; it explains, as we shall see, the importance that Barthes attaches to the contemporary writer's rejection of traditional literary theories and his search for a neutral style.

ALTHOUGH NOT HIMSELF a Marxist—he has spoken acidly of the sterility of Marxist criticism—Barthes is a left-wing critic who has been greatly influenced by the theories of Marx and Freud or, in the purely linguistic field, by those of Saussure. He has a good deal to say about "the bourgeois ideology," "the bourgeois period" and "bourgeois" attitudes. He thinks that "the bourgeois period" embraces the whole of French literature from seventeenth-century classicism to the Romantic Movement. During that time "the unity of the bourgeois ideology" produced a "single style" which was indivisible because the "conscience" that informed it was undivided. That is why, in spite of the century that separates them and minor linguistic changes, Fénelon and Mérimée used an "identical instrument" of expression.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there was an upheaval which transformed the situation. Barthes does not analyse the reasons for the upheaval, but it evidently stemmed from the French Revolution and from the widespread challenge to accepted beliefs and institutions that followed. It led, he says, to the emergence of the "unhappy" or divided "conscience." The implications are plain. It was a moral crisis which produced a linguistic crisis. It made the writer realise that linguistic problems involve moral problems and this realisation brought with it a new sense of responsibility.

> The writer took a look at his language and decided that it was not a natural instrument, but a menacing object which might prove to be a source of glory or of compromise according to circumstances.
>
> It seems to me that this is a very important fact because it introduced for the first time into our literature, always so sure of its form, a *sense of responsibility for the literary language* . . . and this sense of responsibility naturally became apparent on the day when History compelled writers to face the harsh disparities of modern society.

One of the immediate effects of the upheaval was the disruption of the classic style.[4] The common or "single" style was replaced by a multiplicity of styles. Instead of speaking the same language as Fénelon and Mérimée had done, writers of the past hundred years—Mérimée and Lautréamont, Mallarmé and Céline, Gide and Queneau, Claudel and Camus—though much closer in time, have written in entirely different styles (*écritures*).

When the system collapsed, the individual writer found himself deprived of the support of a common language, thrown back on his own resources and forced to experiment. He rebelled against the classic language, against the frills of the personal style which Barthes would no doubt regard as "bourgeois" accretions, but his reaction was not at bottom negative. He had already embarked on the search for a new common language. The process continued and seems to have culminated in our own time. "I believe," Barthes writes, "that I detect in the work of certain living authors a hankering after a non-style or a purely spoken style; in short, a rock bottom in style."[5] He equates it in the last analysis with the "colloquial" or "journalistic" style and though he does not give examples they would presumably include Céline, Queneau, and possibly Camus.

He concludes that there has been a reversal of what he calls "the supposed relations" between language and thought. "In classic art," he remarks, "a completely closed system of thought gave birth to words which 'expressed' or 'translated' it." A fixed system of thought expressed in a fixed or static language is contrasted with the amorphous, changing modern idiom. For contemporary writers, he argues, there is no distinction between "thought" or "content" and "language." The two are in-

[4] "The classic style therefore burst apart and the whole of Literature from Flaubert down to our own time has become a problem of language" (*Le Degré Zéro*).

[5] He makes it clear that the neutral or "non-style" has nothing in common with the style of the realists or naturalists. "The realist style is far from being neutral. On the contrary, it bears the most obvious signs of being fabricated."

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extricably interwoven; literature *is* language or, to borrow a phrase from one of the later essays, it is a "very special semantic system."

IT IS AN ingenious theory. There is clearly a good deal of truth in Barthes' account of linguistic changes since the middle of the nineteenth century, but a doubt remains. It is implicit in Barthes' own references to the "colloquial" or "journalistic" style. The neutral style may have been purged of "bourgeois" accretions, but compared with the classic style does it not represent an impoverishment of language? Are we wrong in thinking that in this instance "zero degree" is the equivalent of "negation," that so far from being a new common style, the neutral or "non-style" means simply an absence of style in any recognised sense?[6]

ROLAND BARTHES' views have been developed and extended in his two volumes of collected essays: *Mythologies* and *Essais critiques*. He explains in the earlier of the two books that "myth" like literature is a product of language and stands for the unconscious factors at work in a variety of social phenomena. He goes further in *Essais critiques*. Literature is described as a "system of meaning," but it is not the only system. There are a number of "extra-linguistic languages" — food, clothes, pictures, the cinema, fashion—which like literature reflect social attitudes.

Mythologies (published in 1957) is not primarily concerned with literature. Without the long closing essay on "Myth Today," we might have assumed from a first glance that the fifty short essays are purely occasional pieces dealing with topical subjects such as detergents, holidays, guide books, astrology, or "people in the news" like the Abbé Pierre, Billy Graham, and Poujade. We might even have suspected that an over-serious Frenchman was using these rather flimsy themes as an excuse for constructing a series of ponderous philosophical edifices. It is true that they are reprinted from different magazines, but behind them is a firm purpose which gives unity to the scattered essays. For Barthes makes a very determined effort to get down to "rock bottom," to uncover the "myths" at the root of activities which though sometimes trivial in themselves are symptomatic of the society in which we are living. These activities can be divided broadly into four groups: contemporary cults, publicity, literature, and *spectacles* (a word that in French includes virtually every kind of performance from straight plays to all-in wrestling). If they are not invariably convincing, his essays are for the most part extremely penetrating and often highly entertaining.

BOXING is dubbed a "Jansenist sport" because it is "the demonstration of an excellence" and for this reason inferior—apparently morally inferior —to all-in wrestling. The *Tour de France* is a mutilated survival of "the myth of human achievement"; the "mythical content" of *La Dame aux Camélias* is "the archetype of lower-middle class sentimentality." The advent of the holiday season gives rise to some reflexions on "the writer on holiday." Newspaper pictures of the writer letting his hair down, donning shorts and indulging in frolics on the beach are very reassuring for the bourgeois. He realises that the writer after all is only human and that if he becomes a nuisance with his writings society will have no difficulty in putting him in his place. It is not quite as simple as that. Barthes recalls the story of Gide reading Bossuet as he sailed down the Congo. It is, he says, an important sociological detail. The fact that the writer goes on holiday shows that he is a human being, but unlike other workers who change their nature and turn into mere holiday-makers the moment they reach the beach, the writer does not change. His is a double nature; he is both man and writer.

> Holidays are a sign of his humanity certainly, but the god remains; he is a writer in the same way that Louis XIV was a king—even when perched on the w.c.

The Abbé Pierre exemplifies a "sort of zero degree in hair-dos." It draws attention to the Franciscan ideal, but though it was originally conceived as something negative which would not clash with the appearance of sanctity, Barthes believes that it soon acquired a much more positive significance: it disguises the Abbé as St. Francis. The moral he draws is a solemn one:

> I find myself wondering whether the fine and touching iconography of the Abbé Pierre is not an alibi which is used by the public to enable them once again to substitute, with impunity, the appearance of charity for the reality of justice.

Billy Graham fares much worse:

> If God really does speak through the mouth of Dr. Graham, we can only conclude that God must be an idiot: the Message is an astonishing concoction of puerility and platitude . . . Billy Graham's "success" is a sign of the precarious mental state of the French lower-middle class.

[6] See W. Weidlé: *Les Abeilles d'Aristée* (Paris, 1954) especially the chapter called "*La Mort du style*."

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This time the moral is political:

> We know that it is really a question of politics: Americans are only interested in French atheism because they think it is paving the way for communism. When they talk about "awakening" France from atheism they mean awakening her from the fascination of communism. Billy Graham's campaign is nothing but an episode in the McCarthy story.

In other essays he exposes the "profit motive," or rather the attempts to conceal the profit motive under a superficial moral veneer. *The Blue Guides* are a subtle form of propaganda, a "bourgeois" plot to promote the cult of mountains "which is rightly associated with the Swiss-Protestant moral code and which has always been a bastard mixture of back-to-nature and puritanism (regeneration through the purity of the air, moral ideals inspired by the heights, mountain-climbing as a civic virtue, etc.)." The concepts of "regeneration" and "civic virtue" encourage the idea that a mountain holiday is morally preferable to a lowland holiday and are of great benefit to *hôteliers*. The economic motive does not stop there:

> *The Blue Guides* remain linked to a bourgeois mythology which has fallen into a state of partial decay: a mythology that postulates (religious) Art as the supreme cultural value, but treats its "treasures" and "riches" simply as a comforting method of storing up merchandise (creation of museums).

Then it is the turn of the Michelin Guides:

> We can see already how in the Michelin Guides the numbers of bathrooms and hotel forks [indicating the standard of *cuisine*] are competing with the number of "famous sights": the bourgeois myths, too, have their differential geology.

The First World Congress of Detergents, held in Paris in September 1954, was the occasion of one of the most striking essays in the volume. Barthes observes that if the psychoanalysts had been up to their job they might have had some very interesting things to say about the manufacturers' methods of advertising. Javel water, for example, was regarded as a kind of "liquid fire" which "killed" dirt and needed careful handling to prevent it from "burning up" the objects it was supposed to cleanse. Soap powders are much milder in their effect. Their function is to "drive away" dirt and not to "kill" it. Their foam gives the impression of lightness and harmlessness. This is the conclusion:

> The important thing is to have found a way of concealing the abrasive nature of the detergent under the charming image of a substance which is at once light and penetrating, which can regulate the molecular order of the fabric without damaging it. Our euphoria, however, should not blind us to the fact that there is a sphere in which soap flakes and detergents are one and the same thing: the sphere of the international Trust.

The essay on strip-tease is the best value of all. In England it suggests high-powered executives with bowler hats, rolled umbrellas and pin stripes sneaking away from their offices to attend the afternoon session at the local "strip club," sitting in serried, excited rows with beads of perspiration forming on prematurely balding pates as they wait for the "stripper" to put on her more sensational numbers. That is not how Barthes sees it:

> Strip-tease, at any rate as we know it in Paris, is based on a contradiction: the woman is desexualised at the very moment she is stripped naked.

So far from being the vice of the prosperous *voyeur*, it is a "moral vaccination" which provides, or should provide, immunity against unfortunate practices.[7]

ESSAIS CRITIQUES probes further into some of the fundamental problems of literature, the function of criticism, and the relations between the two. In an essay called *"Écrivains et Écrivants,"* he distinguishes between "the writer" and "the man who writes." A man is a writer because he has decided to be a writer and not because he wishes to write a particular book. "For the writer, *to write* is an intransitive verb: for the man who writes it is transitive." The writer has about him something of the priest, the man who writes something of the clerk. The fact that society invests the writer with a priestly aura and turns his work into a vocation is significant. It is part of a collective defence mechanism which enables "polite" society, when it feels embarrassed by the content of a work of literature, to place it at a distance, to transform it into a mere "spectacle" which neutralises its potentially disturbing or disruptive effects.

Although he disapproves of the idea that

[7] "The nude itself . . . remains unreal, smooth and closed like a lovely slippery object, removed by its very extravagance from the world of common use: that is the profound significance of the sexual organ of diamonds or tortoiseshell which is the real goal of strip-tease: the ultimate triangle, by its pure and geometrical form, by its hard, brilliant material, serves like a sword of purity as a barrier against the sexual organ and carries the woman definitively into a metallic universe, since the (precious) stone is the inescapable sign of the total and useless object."

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writing is a "vocation," a "gift" or a "special grace," Barthes' distinction between "the writer" and "the man who writes" is tantamount to an admission that the writer is "different" from the next man, that he has something the other has not. When he goes on to discuss the nature of literature, we have the impression that the novelty sometimes lies in his terminology rather than in his ideas. The term "structuralism" (described as being "neither a school nor even a movement, but an activity") is introduced in order to define literature. Its aim, he says, is not to provide "an original 'impression' of the world, but by the authentic construction of *a* world... to make *the* world intelligible":

> Literature is truth, but the truth of literature is at once its powerlessness to reply to the questions men ask about their misfortunes and the power to ask real questions, total questions in which the answer is not implied by the form in which the question is put: an undertaking with which no philosophy perhaps has so far dealt successfully and which would seem to belong to literature.

His view of criticism, which he describes as a "purely formal" activity, is decidedly astringent. In an essay first published in English in *The Times Literary Supplement* under the very apt title of "Criticism as Language," he has this to say of the relations between literature and criticism:[8]

> The world exists and the writer uses language: such is the definition of literature. The object of criticism is very different; it deals not with "the world," but with the linguistic formulations made by others; it is a comment on a comment, a secondary or *meta*-language... applied to a primary language (or language-as-object).
>
> A work of literature is a very special semantic system, the aim of which is to put "meaning" into the world, but not "a meaning."... This being so, the critic is not called upon to reconstitute the message of the work, but only the system, just as the business of the linguist is not to decipher the meaning of a sentence, but to determine the formal structure which permits the transmission of its meaning.

In the same essay he observes that contemporary French critics owe virtually nothing to Anglo-Saxon criticism, to Spitzer or to Croce. In spite of his preoccupation with language, Barthes' aims are certainly far removed from those of the exponents of "close criticism" or stylistics. The task of criticism, he declares, is not to "discover in the work of the author under consideration something 'hidden' or 'profound' or 'secret' which has previously escaped notice." It lies in "*fitting together*, in the manner of a skilled cabinet-maker, the language of the day (Existentialism, Marxism, or psychoanalysis) and the language of the author, that is, the formal system of logical rules that he has evolved in the conditions of his time."[9]

THE VIEW THAT CRITICISM is "purely formal," that its language is no more than a "secondary language," that the critic has at his disposal a number of ready-made "critical languages" which he "fits" to the language of his author, would appear to circumscribe his role considerably. While this is undoubtedly true up to a point, there is an important factor which must not be overlooked. The contrast between "the language of the day" and "the language of the author," between "discover" and "cover," is the sign of a tension underlying not merely Barthes' own criticism, but the work of good critics through the ages. Criticism relies to a greater extent than any other form of writing on the departmental sciences. The French authors of a manual of literary criticism consign all criticism produced before the nineteenth century to what they call "*pré-histoire*."[10] This is not quite fair. What we find in earlier as well as in modern criticism is an internal conflict between objective and subjective, between a form of criticism which is trying to become "scientific" and "appreciation" which is the critic's instinctive desire to describe his emotional response to a particular work. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, criticism was dominated by the rhetoricians and their "rules" which were simply an attempt to evolve objective or scientific criteria *within the framework of literature itself*. In the nineteenth century the "rules" were abandoned; criticism looked outside literature for its criteria and there was a fresh attempt to place it on a genuinely scientific basis by making philosophical determinism the foundation of a critical system.[11] Barthes' plea for the formal application of "the language of the day" to a literary work is a continuation of the efforts of his predecessors to find an objective or quasi-scientific criterion to act as a corrective to subjective appreciation.

[8] The English version of the essay is reprinted in *The Critical Moment* (London, 1964). It is reproduced in French under the title of "Qu'est-ce que la Critique?" in *Essais critiques*.

[9] "If there is such a thing as critical proof, it lies not in the ability to *discover* the work under consideration but, on the contrary, to *cover* it as completely as possible with one's own language."

[10] J. C. Carloni & Jean C. Filloux: *La Critique littéraire* (Collection: *"Que sais-je?"*, 3rd ed., Paris, 1960).

[11] Taine was of course one of the pioneers. His preference for the word "method" rather than "system" was probably a sign of the tension to which I have referred. Compare Barthes' repeated use of "system."

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The "formalist" approach explains the austerity or, more accurately, the aridity of some of the essays on individual authors. Barthes' favourites among the moderns are Kafka, Brecht, Raymond Queneau, Michel Butor, and Robbe-Grillet, but anyone who expects to have them elucidated or his appreciation of them sharpened may well be disappointed. The essays are full of that abstract theorising which for Anglo-Saxon readers is the bane of French criticism. He naturally admires Kafka for his "rigour" and dwells on what he regards as the importance of his "technique of allusion." He writes well of the way in which Queneau caricatures different "languages" in order to produce his comic effects, but did not Anglo-Saxon critics do the same thing long ago for Joyce's linguistic devices? Butor's *La Modification* is a brilliant *tour de force*, but one wonders whether the dialogue between the protagonist and his conscience is really such an innovation as Barthes imagines. He seems drawn to Brecht by political sympathies, forgets most of his theories, and praises him for what, in spite of the obscure language in which he couches it, is surely no more than simple moral uplift. The oddest contributions are the four essays on Robbe-Grillet. This novelist is naturally a great exponent of "zero degree": "*degré zéro des choses*," "*degré zéro de la personne*" and " *degré zéro de l'anecdote*." His achievement lies not in producing novels which enrich our experience, but in doing things that no one had previously attempted. *Le Voyeur* "is a book which only holds together as an absolute exercise in negation." The novelist's "radical refusal of tragedy, which is no more than an offer of consolation in human misfortune, gives his undertaking its outstanding value."

THESE CRITICISMS do not apply to the study of Racine which was published in French two years ago and has recently appeared in an English translation in the United States. It is far superior to the monograph on Michelet and is much the most lucid, as well as the most enjoyable, exercise in practical criticism that he has so far given us.[12] He disclaims any intention of investing the book with a "retrospective unity." It contains three essays which were the result of "different circumstances." The longest essay on "The Racinian Man," which occupies three-quarters of the volume, was written as an introduction to a collected edition of the plays. It is followed by two shorter essays on contemporary methods of production and academic criticism of Racine.

In his foreword Barthes remarks, characteristically, that Racine is more "open" to contemporary "critical languages" than any other author. The "languages" of sociology, biography, psychoanalysis and depth psychology have already been tried. He tells us that his own language is "slightly psychoanalytical," but that his approach is not as he did not wish to duplicate the work of Charles Mauron. This is a puzzling statement. It is not a systematic piece of psychoanalysis like Mauron's study, but he consistently applies the Freudian method of symbolic interpretation and the Freudian concepts.

The main essay divides into two sections. The first is a general survey of "the Racinian man" and his world; the second consists of short criticisms of each of the eleven tragedies. He opens with an admirable evocation of the Racinian landscape:

> The great tragic sites are arid lands, squeezed in between sea and desert... Troezen, where Phèdre dies, is a scorched knoll fortified by rubble.... Even outside the house, there is no real breath of air; there is scrub, the desert, unorganised space.

The "unorganised space" of the desert is contrasted with the constricted space of the "chamber" where the tragedies are enacted, where the characters are dogged by "hidden Power" lurking in the shadows. The basic situation is "the Racinian man" imprisoned in a confined space, desiring to break out, seeking freedom in flight and meeting death administered stealthily by poison or strangulation, or violently by the sword. The geographical situation is matched by the social-psychological situation: the "community" which in each of the plays is rent by internal upheavals caused, as often as not, by rebellion against the "law," by the conflict between Eros and an authority which, significantly, is incarnate in a father-figure. "Racine's theatre," writes Barthes, "is not a theatre of love. Its subject is the use of force within a situation that is generally erotic." He is perceptive on the techniques of aggression used in Racine's world, on the divisions arising from the "fault" or transgression of the codes that govern it, and the reversal of fortune which frequently overtakes the hero.

In his studies of the individual plays he applies his findings to the particular situation in each play. This enables him to elaborate and analyse the general concepts in greater detail. He attacks the theory that *Bérénice* records the victory of "duty" over "inclination." Titus, he argues, listens to the voice not of "duty" but of "public opinion": he repudiates Bérénice because he is afraid of "what people will say." *Bajazet*, as he neatly observes, is the story of a male confined

[12] *Sur Racine* (Paris, 1963) *On Racine*. (New York, 1964). *Michelet par lui-même* (Paris, 1954).

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within a female milieu which undermines his strength and brings him down. In *Phèdre* Racinian "constraint" becomes oral constraint. Silence is interpreted as guilt. Some characters speak too little and too late; others too much and too soon. This is the cause of the final tragedy: the destruction of Hippolyte.

ALTHOUGH "The Racinian Man" is rich in critical insights which cannot fail to stimulate anyone interested in Racine, it does not offer a fresh interpretation of his work as a whole or introduce any striking changes into what is by now a familiar pattern. The essay on "Racine Spoken" is a different matter. It is a startling piece of iconoclasm which reveals a very different attitude towards the dramatist. Barthes begins by saying that the public of today only goes to a performance of Racine to hear the show passages declaimed by celebrated actresses. "Musical lines, famous *tirades*," he writes, "stand out against a background of obscurity and boredom." He attributes it to the attempts of producers to "treat [the plays] both as psychological drama and as oratorio." The emphasis on psychological detail, on the "recitation of a *text*" is a "bourgeois" trait: it comes from "the ineradicable prejudice which insists that words *translate* thought." Vilar's production of *Phèdre* at the Théâtre National Populaire was "anarchic" and "irresponsible." Maria Casarès risked a good deal and lost a good deal by playing the part of Phèdre. After demolishing the producer and the star for treating the play as though it were a naturalistic psychological drama at the expense of the ritual element, the critic proceeds to lay rough hands on the Master. It appears that he is not altogether blameless, that it is by no means certain that "the role of Phèdre is a good one":

> Racine is undoubtedly a very impure, one might almost say a baroque author, in whom elements of genuine tragedy mingle discordantly with the already vigorous germs of the future bourgeois theatre; far from being the radiant summit of an art, it is the very type of the transitional work, in which death and life struggle against one another. . . . On the stage, perhaps, his work is already three-quarters dead.

We can only conclude, charitably, that it must have been a singularly bad production to provoke such a perverse judgment on what is, indeed, "the radiant summit of an art."

ROLAND BARTHES modestly described his first book as "no more than a hypothesis." He is the last person who would wish to be regarded as a "safe" or even a "sound" critic. It can therefore be said without disparagement that all his published works are highly ingenious, highly stimulating "hypotheses" whose effect on the reader can only be eminently salutary.

They Forgot

They forgot
When their livid flesh hunted him
The timid flesh that bore him:
When their tearing hands sought him
The soft hands that rocked him.
Their seeking eyes found him
And they cracked him in their racks
And they reeled him on their wheels
And they forgot
Eyes that cried once with pain
When he first met this earth.
They swathed him in red flame.
They might as well have burned him
With his afterbirth.

David John Lines

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FILM

Jean Vigo

By Eric Rhode

FEW SEQUENCES are more typical of Vigo's style than the opening of *Zéro de Conduite* (1932–33). An ape-like schoolboy in uniform, seated in a railway carriage, is travelling back to boarding school. The compartment is constricted, filthy and unadorned; smoke billows outside the window; agitated music conveys movement; a passenger sleeps in a corner. The train stops—and our sense of imprisonment is reinforced by a shot, taken from outside, of the boy at the compartment window, low-lit, his hands pressed against the glass. But the boy is impassive, and the shot is brief and unsentimental; going to school or being imprisoned, it seems, is a natural event.... He is joined by a companion, and the train moves on. The boys play games—make rabbit shadows, rib each other. Two balloons are blown up, and—shades of Apollinaire—stroked as though they were breasts. Plutocratic cigars emerge. Then a low-angled, fantastic, lyrical shot: of smoke outside the carriage and of smoke within, of the boys with cigars in their mouths, a balloon floating above their heads. But, again, the mood is only held for an instant. The train stops abruptly; the sleeping passenger clatters to the floor. "*Il est mort*," shouts one of the boys. They push open the compartment door and leap out on to the platform. On the door window we read *Non Fumeurs*.

"If we must be prisoners, at least let us choose our own prison and create there pleasure and joy so that we'll want to live there all our lives." Vigo cut this Dickensian remark from the final shooting script of *Zéro de Conduite*—perhaps because it stated his feelings too directly. Certainly the notion that man thrives on limitations is at the heart of his work. Vigo assumes that seeds are most likely to burgeon in stony ground, much as he was stimulated by working under difficult conditions on an impossibly low budget. Fantasy, the faculty of improvisation, needs its prison, whether this prison takes the form of a barge or a boarding school or a train. And fantasy seems to transform this prison —seems, as it were, to explode it.

Vigo's critics divide, rather neatly, into two camps: those who stress the prison aspect of his work, and those who emphasise its fantasy. When *Zéro de Conduite* was first shown, the Press was hostile almost to a man and found it sordid, hateful, violent, scatological, etc. The trouble was, they confounded subject matter with treatment, and assumed the film to be as squalid as its location. But Vigo's few admirers were as much confused as his denigrators; they became sentimental about his prisons and misunderstood how fantasy transforms rather than destroys them. Vaguely they knew something about Vigo's anarchism, and from it they deduced, falsely, that his aims were subversive. Some of his enemies came to the same conclusion, but for different motives. The French Government, for instance, banned *Zéro de Conduite* for over twenty years on the ground that it endangered "national security."

Later critics, however, tended to stress the fantasy aspect of Vigo's films, seeing them as surrealist; since 1945, these critics have made much of his lyricism, his "delicious poetry." Now Vigo, it is true, did start to make films at a time when surrealism was a major force —*À Propos de Nice* was made in 1929, the year of the second Surrealist Manifesto; and he did give an enthusiastic lecture on Buñuel's *Le Chien Andalou* (script by Salvador Dali). All the same, to label his work as anarchist and/or surrealist, and to go no further, is liable to blind us to its unusual merit.

STILL, THESE LABELS are inescapable. Take anarchism, for instance: the censors were understandably cautious about Vigo from the start, if only because of his father's reputation. The story is beautifully told in P. E. Salès Gomès' biography, *Jean Vigo*.[1] When still in his 'teens,

([1] Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1957.)

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Eugène Bonaventure de Vigo was arrested on a false charge of theft and jailed for two months. He came out of prison a convinced anarchist and adapted the fighting name of Almereyda (an anagram of *y a (de) la merde*). A short time later, when working as a photographer's assistant, he was again arrested—for carrying a small box of photographic magnesium. The official court chemist described this powder as being an unknown explosive of devastating power. Almereyda was sentenced to a year in jail, much of which time he spent in solitary confinement.

When he was released, he began to edit an anarchist paper; and in 1905 his mistress, Emily, gave birth to Jean. A painter friend of the family described the child as the son of "undernourished parents (living) in a dirty little attic full of half-starved cats." The parents were ruining their health with over-work, and Almereyda was continually in and out of jail (mostly in). His son was often brought to visit him.

By 1913 Almereyda and a colleague, Merle, started a new paper, *Le Bonnet Rouge*, and somewhat murkily their fortunes improved. The war began, and cautiously the paper took up a pacifist line. Almereyda was probably encouraged: he received, it seems, a secret grant from the dubious Malvy, Minister of the Interior, and from a certain Duval who made secret visits to Switzerland to bring back reports on German affairs for the *Sûreté*—and was later shot as a German spy. Almereyda began to live in style. His anarchist friends no longer visited him. Enemies talked of his houses, his cars, his girls.... His health (never good) was failing and he took to morphia. Then in 1917, shortly after the French Mutinies, he was arrested. A few days afterwards he was found strangled in his cell, allegedly with a pair of bootlaces bought for him by his twelve-year-old son. An official statement said that he had died of a haemorrhage, a second statement said that he had committed suicide. It seems likely now that he was murdered—but by whose orders? Jean Vigo always believed that Clemenceau was responsible. Others have argued that the murder was instigated by Malvy because Almereyda knew too much. Salès Gomès suggests a much simpler explanation: the police had a long-standing feud with Almereyda which they had been unable to settle while he was protected by Malvy.

VIGO WENT to considerable lengths to clear his father's name; and he kept in touch with anarchist friends of the family, some of whom worked on his projects. At the end of his life, also, he was in two minds about joining the Communist party. Still, how far do his films reflect or distort these political concerns? A Marxist critic, Bruno Voglino, claims that, "Vigo unequivocally says *merde* to a world which he hated and which hated him." Now Vigo did remember his father's sobriquet, and the excremental does play at least a nominal part in his work, as when the mutiny in *Zéro de Conduite* is triggered off by one of the boys saying *merde* to the headmaster. Even so, his work is never sullen or rancorous—as Voglino appears to imply. Vigo doesn't give the impression of someone who hates the world, even the world of the bourgeoisie.

On the contrary, he is fascinated by the bourgeoisie, much as a child might be fascinated by a piece of broken glass. *À Propos de Nice* begins badly: aerial views of the town, palm trees, waves, skyscapes—amateur doodling: Vigo isn't engaged with his subject at this point. But the documentary does spring alive with a series of hand-held camera shots of the bourgeoisie as they take their Sunday morning stroll along the *Promenade des Anglais*: elderly gentlemen with pince-nez and gaiters, opulent ladies with boas. The camera lingers compulsively on clothes, legs, and feet (especially feet). Moreover, it is interesting to note how these birds of paradise are related, by association, to the carnival and to its huge *papier-mâché* dummies with tiny grills in their necks—through which peer doleful operators.

The *Promenade* is continually returned to; and yet in this first sequence I must admit that Voglino is probably right. Vigo goes in for some denigratory *"Montage à la Russe,"* inserting shots of alligators and giraffes; and at one moment the camera does swing away from the crowd to a road-sweeper shovelling up muck. Yet even here, I'm sure, Vigo isn't working purely for a satirical effect; to my mind we are back to the basic conflict in his style—between the squalid and the flamboyant, prison and fantasy. Presently this conflict deepens. People play at tennis and at bowls; yachts glide across the bay—all classes participate: and the camera and editing mime their harmonious movement. Then we are shown slum boys at play; but the camera dwells less on their games than on one boy's rickets and another's skin disease. It pans down to a shot of sewage in the gutters and to a cat, which might have belonged to Almereyda, eating refuse. At once Vigo cuts to a dance-floor, then to a carnival and its Queen, a gentle *grande dame* in a coach, acknowledging roses offered to her by the crowd. At the close of this sequence we cut to Nice cemetery, and the camera moves slowly over discreet marble effigies.

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Death and decay on one side, the finery and flamboyance of life on the other: we never seem to break away from this disturbing conflict. But by the final reel Vigo does point to a change—though this change is hardly less disquieting: factories belch smoke, create and purify their own waste. The carnival is over and the new age begins—but does Vigo really sympathise? The blazing furnaces look menacing; and we are far from reassured by glimpses of a grave-like hole and a mutilated carnival head, followed by a sustained shot of an elderly lady—member of the old régime—graciously chatting to an unseen interlocutor.

À Propos de Nice disturbs because one senses Vigo's own uncertainty. Personal problems war with political ones, and the personal ones win. What we can be sure about is Vigo's obsession. But what exactly is the source of his conflict? Most of the bourgeoisie shown are elderly and parental; could it be that Vigo is referring unconsciously to Almereyda, the anarchist who took *merde* into his name and was seduced by the opulent life of the rich? In the cemetery scene, for instance, the camera dwells on the statue of a distinguished middle-aged man. Is Vigo making an act of homage to his father, as some critics assume; or is he merely poking fun at Mediterranean burial habits? Vigo himself probably didn't know.

In zéro de conduite, however, his anarchist sympathies do at first seem clear-cut. Here "the hated world," the bourgeoisie, is represented by the school staff—a rum crew indeed. The headmaster is a shrill, bearded dwarf garbed in frock coat and bowler hat; the chemistry master is a randy, plump Captain Grimes; while the snooping supervisor Bec-de-Gaz is, as James Agee put it, like "a tiptoeing lobster dressed in an undertaker's suit." The one likable master is Huguet, a new recruit, irresponsible and casual, a good mimic of Charlie the tramp. Vigo's notion of authority is plainly derisive—and sometimes this point of view leads him to be crass. At one point the headmaster grows anxious because two of the boys develop an over-intense friendship and he warns the younger boy, the sensitive Tabard, of its dangers. Vigo sees the headmaster's concern as prurient; but how else does he expect the man to feel and act? Also Tabard, of all unlikely people, is responsible for starting off a mutiny. *Zéro de Conduite* was created out of the sensitive Vigo's own experience (*Ce film, c'est tellement ma vie de gosse que j'ai hâté de faire autre chose*), and he is still unable to detach himself from a boy's point of view. The fixation is understandable: Vigo had sore wounds; he knew what it was to be publicly "exposed"—in his case as the son of an alleged traitor.

Does *Zéro de Conduite* display more than a schoolboy's contempt for authority—or rather, does the mutiny signify some wished-for social revolution? There is little evidence to support such a generalisation, even when we assume Vigo's necessary caution in making it, or his technical difficulties in filming a mutiny—the narrative line becomes very scrappy in the final scenes. The masters are no more than Aunt Sallies, mere flies to wanton boys. We have no sense of an oppressive authority—the sort of thing likely to make one want to start lobbing bombs. The school itself with its playground, fuggy classroom, and bare kitchen is like a prison; but prisons are a *donnée* of the Vigo world, and no one would want to change that. Besides, as a symbol of revolution, the mutiny is very unusual. After Tabard has said *merde* and triggered it off, we at once cut to the famous dormitory scene. Boys pillow-fight and drag chamber pots about; then, suddenly and oddly, the action goes into slow motion. Jaubert's music dissolves into an eerie, undefinable sound. The boys drift along the dormitory; some of them bear lanterns; before them rides their smirking leader carried on a chair. Goose feathers fall like snowflakes. The master's cubicle is like a theatre, a shrine; and we are reminded of a carnival at Nice, of a religious procession, of fallen angels.... The prison isn't destroyed but transformed by fantasy. Yet it remains a prison.

After this, the final sequence is, from the revolutionary point of view, something of an anti-climax: sports day in the playground, where firemen perform gymnastics (with the neatness of Euclid) before a bevy of local dignitaries. No malice, no resentment—the glittering uniforms, all frills and curlicues, are splendid: the sequence has the delicacy of a René Clair. The boys in full cry hurl stones at the firemen and the masters—who, implausibly pretending that the boys demonstrate for the visitors' benefit, rush their guests into the building and allow them, undisturbed, to watch the shindig from an attic. Boys climb on to the school roof and raise their pirates' flag.

In fact, to see Vigo's anarchism (or, if it comes to that, any form of anarchism) as revolutionary is to make nonsense of the film. As I understand it, anarchists are too contemptuous of organisation to be much concerned with worked-out programmes (as revolutionaries are); at best, they hope for some immediate release from pressure. The mutiny in *Zéro de Conduite* allows the boys the pleasures of cameraderie and of a bust-up, but it offers no future; one

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can't see the boys building their own ideal society.

Vigo doesn't blow up prisons in order to release their occupants: the explosion is pure fantasy and takes place in the mind. In this, one sees how his anarchism is closely linked to his use of surrealist techniques.

> The immediate reality of the surrealist revolution [Sartre writes in *What is Literature?*] is not to change anything whatever in the physical and apparent order of things but to criticise a movement in the mind.

Duchamp aims to destroy our assumptions about reality when he creates a lump of sugar in marble; we are shaken by its weight and its failure to melt. But in truth Duchamp doesn't destroy the object's essence, since this is impossible. What he does, instead, is to create an imaginary object. According to Sartre, surrealism liberates pure imagination and is "the *only* poetic movement of the first half of the 20th century." Some of the surrealists, continues Sartre, saw their movement as socially disruptive, but in this sense their achievement is almost wholly negative. Surrealism may weaken the structure of society by its undermining, say, of religious beliefs; it fails, however, to create a positive programme.

> We have no revelation, no intention of a new object, no seizure of matter or content—only the *purely formal* consciousness of the mind as a surpassing, an appeal, and an emptiness.

And Sartre, with the proud confidence of an *engagé* critic, quotes Hegel: surrealism "penetrates this life like the spirit of a slave"—being an attempt to escape from consciousness of oneself and of one's situation in the world. It reflects rather than analyses the absurdity of the First World War.

VIGO HAS HAD a noticeable influence on some of the New Wave directors; above all on François Truffaut, who quotes heavily from *Zéro de Conduite* in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. But Vigo's influence is also more pervasive: from him stem the improvisation and technical freedom of the New Wave people—their use of slow motion, jump cuts, and tracking shots. The director who uses this method of working may not be the final arbiter of reality as Luis Buñuel is, say, in *Le Chien Andalou*, but he is at least its conscious master; we aren't allowed to forget his play of mind. Still, though Vigo isn't a radical in the Sartrean sense, we can hardly say that his work is no more than "a *purely formal* consciousness of the mind—a surpassing, an appeal, and an emptiness." (A case one can sometimes make against the narcissism of Jean-Luc Godard). The world may be a prison which Vigo transforms—blows up into glittering fragments or wrenches out of context; but at any rate, we aren't allowed to forget that first and foremost it *is* a prison.

It is likely, though, that Vigo found his obsession with prisons and fantasy too constricting; anyhow, in his last film he managed partially to escape from it. But his last film also killed him. His health was never good, and the effort of making *L'Atalante* (1933–34) so lowered his resistance that it brought on an attack of the pulmonary infection from which he died at the age of twenty-nine. (With the bitter knowledge of knowing that his distributors were mutilating the film to make it more commercial—the original copy was only more or less reconstructed after World War II.)

How did he manage to make this partial escape?

In his autobiography, *Return to Yesterday*, Ford Madox Ford tells of an anarchist dinner at the old Holborn Restaurant, and of how some of the anarchists swore that the best way to achieve their aim was to throw bombs, and of how they were countered by Prince Kropotkin who said that love alone can establish the kingdom of God on earth. Two kinds of anarchism: and in *L'Atalante*, one of the most persuasive love stories in the cinema, Vigo changes sides to become, as it were, a disciple of Kropotkin.

The story is of a country girl, Juliette, and her marriage to Jean, captain of a barge, *L'Atalante*; and of how Juliette's loyalty to her husband is tested on three occasions, on the last one of which the result is nearly disastrous. These temptations all take the form of fantasies, and so are similar to the bomb-throwing type of anarchism—as the first temptation makes clear. On the barge besides the two lovers is an old man, Père Jules (Michel Simon) and a boy (one of the principal actors in *Zéro de Conduite*). Vigo makes it plain that these two have much in common. Père Jules is an amiable and gross old man, willing to please; still, in his childish way he is jealous—like the boy he has no adult relationship and feels excluded from the marriage—and his jealousy takes the form of complaining at the manner in which Juliette has disrupted routine on board (as though it hadn't been chaotic before). He doesn't realise that things are going badly with the two lovers. Juliette, now sexually awakened, is restless; her husband spends too many nights at the barge steering wheel. She becomes curious about Père Jules, and one day visits his cabin.

In this remarkable sequence Vigo gives us some idea of whom the old man is supposed to represent; he is adept at using a sewing machine, a knack probably picked up in prison,

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and the cabin swarms with cats. Its constricted space, mingling filth and opulence, is packed with exotic debris: a puppet orchestra conductor stolen from a carnival at Caracas, a music-box, harpoons, a gramophone with a horn, etc. Juliette is enchanted with these toys, but troubled when she finds in a cupboard a pair of hands pickled in a bottle of brine—all that remains of Père Jules' best friend. Jules can barely resist touching Juliette's hair; he seeks to entertain her by taking off his shirt to show her the marvels of his completely tattooed, obese belly.

In fact, Jules is hardly the kind of man to tempt Juliette into adultery; but the exoticism of this incident does warn us of a danger. Given the right conditions, Juliette, like Madame Bovary, could be destroyed by her need for fantasy. Love integrates: but the things in the cabin are a disorder, and have the impact of surrealist fetishes—the idea of the severed hands is probably derived from *Le Chien Andalou*. Jean appears to realise this danger when he breaks into the cabin to tell Jules that his rubbish stinks and should be thrown out. He may be jealous, but his denunciation and smashing of these things is understandable; they *are* potentially dangerous.

THE SECOND AND MORE IMMEDIATE threat to the marriage takes the guise of a hawker—an Ariel, as somebody has said, to Jules' Caliban. He is young and, in his slick way, attractive; but, in spite of his smiles and wish to please, as lonely as Père Jules: in reality, a one-man band. He offers Juliette silks and perfumes and trinkets more alluring than the debris in the cabin. He is a confidence trickster, if only because he plays on Juliette's confidence—and he soon ends up in a fight with Jean. But the hawker does mention another lure which is far more insidious than himself; and this, the promise of an enchanted city, is Paris itself. As he says,

> *C'est un lot, c'est une affaire. Une ville qui pète feu. La ville lumière à tous les étages. En voulez-vous des élégances? Des vitrines. Des vélos, des motos, des autos à capots pour Toto Parigot. C'est beau. Les Champs-Elysées pour Bébé, les Tuileries pour Bibi, Notre Dame pour Madame. C'est dit. Je vous enlève. Un fois, deux fois. Trois fois. Personne ne dit mot?*

This untranslatable Archie Rice type dialogue gives some idea of the vivacity of *L'Atalante*; but beneath its coruscation what precisely is the lurking danger? Later in the film Père Jules believes he is playing a gramophone record with his finger nail—in fact his boy assistant is playing a hand accordion at the same time—and defends his credulity by saying: "You've seen far more extraordinary things than a disc that works by finger nail. Electricity, do you know what electricity is? Or the radio?" Vigo, I think, is showing us how surrealism is possibly the most fruitful way to express our sense of dismay and wonder in an age of scientific marvels—marvels that dupe the senses and may leave us a prey to superstition. As far as this goes, Vigo *is* a social critic and does refute Sartre.

Juliette's first awareness of Paris comes, significantly, when she first hears a radio—a bulletin announcing the spring sales. When the barge reaches Paris she tries to get her husband to take her into the city, but by a mishap he is unable to do so. Against his wishes she goes alone—and he, in a moment of pique, sails the barge further up the river. But by another mishap Juliette is unable to follow him: her handbag is stolen by a starving pickpocket who is later seized, as in the best anarchist cartoons, by a brutish mob. But she is in despair; she can't find work; the unemployed queue up outside the factory gates. At first Paris *did* offer her a dream—of fairy lights and, more ominously, of her shabbily dressed self reflected in the glass of elegant shop windows. But quite literally she has missed the boat. Snow falls, and the streets are virtually empty; a man tries to pick her up. There is nothing sentimental about these scenes: Vigo is austere, uses long shot—he knows when *not* to quote from Chaplin. Exhausted, Juliette wanders to the city outskirts, to where the underside of civilisation is exposed: twisted girders, discarded boilers, the Seine oily with sewage. The dream spirals down into a nightmare, from which she is only released when Père Jules finds her working in a gramophone shop and takes her back to the barge.

THIS STORY, claims Jean-Paul Marquet, ends on a note of despair—the lovers are condemned to a life of misery together. Again one disagrees: *L'Atalante*, though sometimes melancholic, is never pessimistic; it is witty—Vigo has an unceasing talent for creating gags; it is robust; and it celebrates a love affair which looks like developing after its early vicissitudes into a highly satisfactory marriage. Vigo himself was happily married and, I guess, must have felt his marriage to be his one protection against an often treacherous world. If anything, his argument in *L'Atalante* is that people can *only* be happy through a love based on trust.

On a realistic level, this relationship is, for the most part, subtly drawn. Above all, Juliette's feelings are magnificently evoked: her sense of being a chattel when she is first swung on to

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the barge like a bag of coals, and the vigour with which she takes over the domestic side of barge life by hauling a washtub on deck and ordering the three males to bring her their dirty linen (much to Père Jules' disapproval). The character of Jean is, perhaps, less successful. His anger on learning that Juliette has gone into Paris and his spiteful decision to move the barge up the Seine seem too hysterical in the light of the facts; he behaves as though Juliette had committed adultery. And his grief when he realises his loss is also excessive. (Vigo was probably trying to play against the effect of Jean Dasté's somewhat phlegmatic style of acting.)

These failings are hardly noticeable, though, since the relationship's power over us doesn't depend on its realistic truth alone. The lovers are frequently shown, either together or separately, as lying on their bunk dreaming; and this motif gradually builds up into a cross-cutting sequence at the climax of the film when the two of them, miles apart, twist and turn as though in telepathic communication. Dreams are part of the actual world, and, as Vigo realised, for lovers especially the two often mingle. By bringing such a resonance to the marriage he is able to make it appear as both subtle and rich. At times he shows its development in terms of a dreamlike losing and finding. Fog descends around the barge, and Jean, with a premonition of loss, goes on deck. He calls his wife's name, stumbles, then dimly sees her through the fog, a ghostly figure by the helm. In *L'Atalante* such sharp, incandescent moments recur again and again, and are often crystallised in one shot alone—much as were moments of fantasy in *Zéro de Conduite*. But *L'Atalante* is never surrealist; the dream tides, however bizarre, always flow beneath a realistic surface. Vigo's lyricism is remarkably concise: Juliette's loneliness and diffidence on the wedding night are evoked by *one* distant shot of the barge at dusk, where, silhouetted by her white bridal dress, she waits for her husband on deck while around her the dark grey water moves swiftly. Or, again, passion is evoked in *one* image (reminiscent of Kokoschka's *Les Tourbillons des Vents*), when Jean lifts her into his arms and the breeze swirls her dress. We remember this image later as Jean, after losing his wife, plunges into the river in the hope that the water will recall her to him. And she does appear: a swirling vision in white.

Vigo's imagery gives depth to a novelettish plot: the structure of *L'Atalante* relies less on its narrative than on the association of these images—"a string of pearls" as one critic has said—capable of an almost infinite extension; so that the film, even though the extant copies are all mutilated, seems stylistically coherent.

This style has had a considerable influence on a number of directors including, of all people, Fellini. The final scene in *I Vitelloni* is similar to, and creates the same impression as the scene after the wedding when the barge pulls out from the bank and Juliette's relatives are shown as drifting away from us in a series of tracking shots. But Fellini's imagism is much coarser—is laid on, you might say, with a thicker brush.

In Vigo's case, this style arises from a deeper concern, probably aroused by his awareness of what marriage meant to him: that life involves processes (or rhythms) over which men have little or no control. In *À Propos de Nice* we have an intimation of such an interest, in the contrast between the vitality of the carnival and its threat, the decay of the slums. In *Zéro de Conduit* the boys' mutiny is like a disease that rises up and destroys those who have neglected the source of infection, much as in *Bleak House* poisoned air spreads from Tom-all-Alone's. In *L'Atalante*, however, Vigo stresses mostly forces of growth and health. The film opens with a wedding: an acceptance, if anything is, of the human condition—and this theme is brought out movingly in a shot of the newly-wedded couple as they pick their way across a field, diminutive figures on the horizon. The film also ends on this theme—a bird's eye view of the barge as it steams up-river. And when chaos is come and Jean loses his wife, his one hope is to refind these deep rhythms of nature; suddenly and inexplicably he runs across the sands to look out to sea (an idea echoed by Truffaut in the final moments of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*).

No doubt Vigo was stimulated by the Russians who have this visionary quality in abundance—by the 19th-century novelists and by such directors as Eisenstein and Dovzhenko. But in his wry and delicate way, he made it his own.

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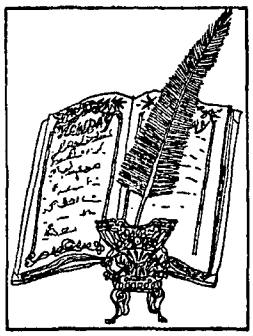

Column

REFERENCE to the Marquis de Sade's *Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue* in recent criminal proceedings has given me second thoughts about literary censorship. I have always been in favour of its complete abolition, as an unjustified restriction on the liberty of thought, speech, and opinion. I have always thought that one has the right to read, write, and publish what one wants, that it is very difficult to show that in fact the reading of books has ever corrupted anyone, and in particular that, if they are of high literary merit, they have a kind of built-in mechanism which protects the reader from taking them as a practical guide to action.

These are, I think, the kind of reasons which influence anyone who advocates the abolition of literary censorship; I am by no means sure whether they apply equally to the stage, the screen, or to television. But the case of de Sade, whose shadow has fallen so incongruously across the Yorkshire moors, is a difficult one to argue. His claim to originality is his defence of cruelty, torture, rape, murder, particularly as applied to the young, the innocent, and the virtuous, as for some people the *sine qua non* of sexual pleasure, and an essential part of the general *chasse au bonheur* to which we all have an inalienable right: "Yet another effort, Frenchmen, if you would become Republicans!" If it were ever shown, even in a single case, that a reading of *Justine* had inspired anyone to practise what de Sade preached in such repetitive detail, I should regard it as a complete justification for preventing the publication of his works.

Is there then a case under our existing law for prosecuting the publication of them? I myself regard him as one of the worst and dullest writers to whom anyone has ever ascribed literary merit, and I agree with John Weightman that he was also "crazy, because he reduced the individual to a phallus." But in the witness-box against me I should find the ghosts of Baudelaire, Swinburne, Guillaume Apollinaire, and the formidable living presence of Madame de Beauvoir, to testify to the genius of the divine Marquis. This is a body of opinion for which I have rather more respect than, say, for those who testified to the literary merit of *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* and it seems to me that if the Marquis were to be prosecuted, a jury would, under the existing law, have no choice except to acquit him.

As it is, *Justine* is easily and cheaply available in a paperback edition. Others beside myself appear to have doubts about exposing all and sundry to de Sade's powers of seduction. The publishers of a forthcoming edition of his letters have announced that to prevent them from falling into "the wrong hands," there will be no paperback edition and they will cost 30s. Pecksniff himself could not do better than this; and how the Marquis, who at least hated hypocrisy, would have laughed at this example of it.

In such matters, I think, intellectuals have a direct and serious responsibility. What kind of responsibility we all have for the crimes of violence which flourish in our midst, and sometimes seem to throw a brilliant and lurid light on the kind of society we live in, is a different matter. Dostoevsky would have said that we were each responsible for all of them and that in this sense society gets the crimes which it deserves.

One need not go as far as Dostoevsky to believe that crime does in fact hold up a mirror to society. There are some crimes which shock us into so sharp an awareness of the horrors which underlie, and sometimes shatter, the surface of our civilisation that it is hard to believe we are not all, somehow, responsible for them, so that if we all, or even only oneself, had been otherwise than we are, they could not really have happened. They strike us as being typical and characteristic of our particular time and place, in the way in which we take the murder of the elder Karamazov as being representative of a whole society, and all the more so because the bare and petty details which necessarily make up most of the evidence in criminal cases belong so intimately and closely to the pattern of daily life; it is as if the wait at the bus stop, the bottle of wine bought in an off-licence, a child's visit to a fun-fair, had all become part of a monstrous and bloodstained ritual.

*

OF COURSE, it would be easy to question the assumption that crimes like the Moor murders illuminate, however horribly, the condition of our society. But I am strengthened in it by the remarkable study of a crime, by Truman Capote, which has recently appeared in four consecutive numbers of the *New Yorker*; it is shortly to be published here by Hamish Hamilton.

The case is that of the Clutter murders which took place near the village of Holcomb (pop. 270) in Kansas in 1959. On the morning of Monday, 15 November, of that year, the bodies

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of four members of the Clutter family, father, mother, son, daughter, were found in their farmhouse, tied, gagged, and blown to pieces by gunshots fired at point-blank range. The father's also had its throat cut. The horror inspired by the crime in Holcomb, and the nearby town of Garden City (pop. 11,000), was all the greater because the Clutters had good claims to be regarded as the perfect American family, deservedly loved and admired by all who knew them, active and leading members of their rural community, energetic, enlightened and generous, the father a man who by his own efforts had become a considerable landowner and conspicuously successful farmer, the daughter young, pretty, virtuous and charming, the boy intelligent, original and inventive; the only shadow across their happiness was that the mother was subject to attacks of melancholia and depression.

Who would have wished to murder a family like this, and for what motive? In fact, two young men recently released on parole from the Kansas State Penitentiary at Lansing. In prison, one of them had learnt of the wealth and prosperity of the Clutters, and together they had formed the project of robbing the safe which stood in Herbert Clutter's office and of killing anyone who might witness the crime; they had been prepared to find up to nine or ten people in the house. They only found four, whom they duly killed; the total proceeds were forty dollars and a small radio set.

So savage and bizarre a crime attracted nation-wide attention, especially because, for some time, there was no evidence which gave the slightest clue to the identity of the murderers. When finally arrested, they showed not the slightest remorse, nor indeed any awareness that they had behaved in any way unusually; the job appeared to them a perfect set-up, even though its results had proved unsatisfactory.

Between their arrest in January 1960, and their execution by hanging, five years elapsed, because of the very liberal right of appeal allowed under the American criminal code. During that period Capote subjected every aspect of the case, and everyone even remotely connected with it, to a minute and meticulous process of investigation and research. The result of his work is a dazzling and brilliant literary *tour-de-force*, which combines all the virtues of a novel, a sociological survey, and a piece of marvellous reportage. But what perhaps is most astonishing about it is the picture it draws of American society, and in particular the contrast between the life of the Clutter family, which might well be taken as an embodiment of all the American virtues, and that of the two murderers, who by the time of their execution had become both agents and victims of most of the evils of which America is capable.

Capote's extraordinary achievement has been to present both sides of this contrast with complete verisimilitude, so that one believes absolutely in the reality of both. Yet they appear to have no point of contact whatsoever, except for that single appalling moment in which the murderers and their victims confronted each other. What is more, each is presented as equally and typically American, in ways which are deeply rooted both in the American past and the American present. Capote's picture of River Valley Farm, where the Clutters lived; of the spacious white homestead set in the vast wheatfields of Kansas; of the little cluster of fruit trees lovingly planted by Herbert Clutter beside the Arkansas river; of his daughter Nancy as she appeared, fresh, cool and petticoated, in *Tom Sawyer* at her school theatricals on the night before she was killed; of the huge plains of Kansas, in the snows and icy winds of winter, the burning heat of harvest, the endless glowing golden Indian summer of the fall in which the Clutters were murdered; of Herbert Clutter himself, the young patriarch, non-smoking, non-drinking, puritanical, Republican, WASP, aggressively male, yet just, fair, generous, affectionate; of the community which looked up to him as a leader; this is something which I certainly shall find unforgettable. It is a picture of everything that is best in the American dream, timeless, idyllic, a rural Utopia, and yet Capote somehow convinces us that at River Valley Farm the dream had really, and today, come true.

BUT EQUALLY REAL, equally convincing, are the shiftless, violent, nomadic, purposeless lives of the two young men who destroyed River Valley Farm; one has the sensation of watching two strange, inhuman, shark-like monsters swim to the surface out of the lower depths of American life. One of the two, Perry Smith, has evidently captured Capote's sympathy in a way in which his accomplice, Dick Hickok, has not, though it was Perry Smith who in fact claimed to have carried out the killing of all four of the Clutters. His parentage and his upbringing take us into areas of American space and time that seem to belong as much to Fenimore Cooper as to today; his father a circus artist who became, all equally vainly, a trapper, explorer, prospector for gold; his mother a Cherokee Indian, a spangled equestrian star of the circus turned prostitute and alcoholic; a brother who killed himself after killing his wife; a sister who fell from the window of a sleazy hotel, leaving behind an empty bottle of whisky. And the boy himself, abandoned by his mother, brought up

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on the merciless charity of Catholic orphanages, a congenital bed-wetter, accompanying his father on trips to the icy wastes of Alaska, merchant seaman at the age of 17, G.I., veteran of the Korean war, amateur weight-lifter, petty criminal, with a strong and muscular body supported on dwarfish feet and stumpy legs broken in a car smash, with dark face and inky hair that betrayed his Indian blood, but the smiling rosy lips of his Irish father, sexually ambivalent, making desperate efforts at self-education, obsessively interested in niceties of grammar and enlarging his vocabulary with words that are rich and strange and exotic, nourishing impossible dreams of life as a skin diver in the warm blue depths of the Pacific, as a deep-sea fisherman, as Perry O' Parsons, the king of Jazz, master of all instruments; there is something at once infinitely pathetic and infinitely terrifying in the wild fantasy life of this creature who succeeded in giving a kind of perverted reality to his dreams.

When he and Dick Hickok had executed the murders at River Valley Farm they set out on a kind of wild and crazy goose-chase down to Mexico. They financed themselves by passing false cheques in shops and department stores, an art of which Hickok was a master. In Mexico, Perry Smith hoped to buy a boat and live by hiring it out to tourists; they came no nearer to it than making up a homosexual foursome with a German businessman on holiday with his boy-friend and living with and off Mexican prostitutes and a rich widow who fell for Hickok. But their money gave out, Mexican wages could not sustain the standard of life which Hickok thought suitable to a free-born American and soon they were hitchhiking their way back to the United States and, fatalistically and fatally, to Kansas.

THE WANDERINGS of Smith and Hickok after the murders at River Valley Farm read like nothing so much as some modern and corrupt version of *Huckleberry Finn*; the beautiful epic has turned sour, Huck and Tom Sawyer, though they still retain a pale shadow of their former charm, have acquired hearts that are cold, callous and depraved, boyish dreams of adventure have given way to utterly futile hopes of living without work by impossible lagoons, and all human relationships have become those of *homo homini lupus*. And when, after a trial in which a strict application of the M'Naughten rules effectively barred any defence on grounds of insanity, they finally reached the death cells in the Kansas State Penitentiary, they found themselves in company with a schizophrenic student who had suddenly killed his father, mother and sister, and two young soldiers who, having broken out of the military prison at Leavenworth, set off on a tour of the United States, as crazy as their own, in the course of which they murdered seven people, including a pair of elderly ladies whom they garrotted with a black bullwhip which they happened to find in a car they had stolen.

In the death cells, the relations between Smith and Hickok deteriorated. Hickok had confessed that, in their raid on River Valley Farm, one of the motives that was uppermost in his mind was the thought of raping Nancy Clutter. Perry Smith was shocked by this: he did not approve of people "who could not control themselves sexually."

CAPOTE tells his story with a marvellous objectivity which never strays from the ground of fact and the personal statement of the murderers, their victims and all those who could provide any evidence about the crime. He neither condemns, defends, nor explains. The record speaks for itself, and does so with a haunting vividness which few works of imagination could equal. But perhaps what is truly most horrifying in his story is the vast and all-embracing nihilism, the complete futility and purposelessness which inspires all the acts of his two killers. It is as well that we have the golden images of River Valley Farm and the Clutters to set against them.

The nihilism of a younger generation has also, in another context, been troubling the distinguished literary critic, Leslie Fiedler. In an article entitled "The New Mutants" in *Partisan Review* he confesses that such thoughts first occurred to him some years ago when he heard one of his students cry out: *Freud is a fink!*

At that moment, says Fiedler, "I knew that I was already in the future, though I did not yet suspect that there would be no room in that future for the university system to which I have devoted my life.... I am thinking of course of the recent demonstrations at Berkeley and elsewhere, whose ostensible causes were civil rights or freedom of speech or Viet Nam, but whose not so secret slogan all the time was: THE PROFESSOR IS A FINK!"

Fiedler identifies this slogan as a protest by the young against

> the very notion of man which the university sought to impose on them; that bourgeois-Protestant version of Humanism, with its view of man as justified by rationality, work, duty, vocation, maturity, success; and its concomitant understanding of childhood and adolescence as a temporarily privileged time of preparation for assuming these burdens. The new irrationalists,

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> however, are prepared to advocate prolonging adolescence to the grave and are ready to dispense with schools as an outlived excuse for leisure. To them work is as obsolescent as reason, a vestige (already dispensable for large numbers) of an economically marginal, pre-automated world; and the obsolescence of the two adds up to the obsolescence of everything our society understands by maturity.

As one symptom of such an attitude, Fiedler points to the popularity of the Teach-In, which, he says, "can be seen implicitly as a mockery and a parody of the real classroom; related to the actual business of the university, to real teaching, only as a Demonstration Trial (of Dimitrov, of the Soviet Doctors, of Eichmann) to real justice, or Demonstration Voting (for one party or a token two) to real suffrage."

He goes on to argue that what students are saying now has for years been anticipated and sedulously propagated in literature, "porno-poetry preceding and preparing the way for what Lewis Feuer has aptly called porno-politics," and that both in literature and in politics it represents a total rejection of all previously accepted ideas of masculinity in Western society. "What is at stake from Burroughs to Bellow, Ginsberg to Albee to Gregory Corso is... the radical transformation of the Western male—utterly unforeseen in the decades before us but visible now in every high-school and college classroom, as well as on paperback racks in airports and supermarkets." He relates the felt need for such a transformation to economic, technological, and social changes which have deprived men of their traditional functions: automation dispensing with the need of them as workers and producers, push-button nuclear warfare making physical courage unnecessary and aggressiveness dangerous, the use of contraceptives by women depriving them of the right of decision with regard to paternity.

In this so un-Nietzschean *Umwertung aller Werte*, Fiedler identifies as one significant tendency the assumption by men of feminine physical characteristics. "Few of us have really understood how the Beatle hair-do is part of a syndrome, of which high heels, jeans tight over the buttocks etc., are other aspects, symptomatic of a larger retreat from masculine aggressiveness to female allure—in literature and the arts to the style called 'camp.' And fewer still have realised how the style, though the invention of homosexuals, is now the possession of basically heterosexual males as well, a strategy in their campaign to establish a new relationship not only with women but with their own masculinity. In the course of that campaign, they have embraced certain kinds of gestures and garb, certain accents and terms associated with females; which is why we have been observing recently (in life as well as in fiction and verse) young boys, quite unequivocally male, playing all the traditional roles of women; the vamp, the coquette, the whore, the icy tease, the pure young virgin...."

If one wanted to illustrate this passage (and also to correct any assumption that what Fiedler is saying applies only to the United States) one could not do better than make a selection from the photographs contained in *David Bailey's Box of Pin-Ups* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 63s.). Of all the photographs, only four are of women; for as Francis Wyndham solemnly informs us: "In the age of Mick Jagger, it is the boys who are the pin-ups." But the vamp, the coquette, the whore, the icy tease, the pure young virgin are all there, new mutants all, among whom you may take your pick. I know who mine is.

R.

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Donald Davie

T. S. Eliot (1928)

"Peut-être qu'une fois de plus la couronne d'or nous serait présentée comme elle le fut à César."
(*MAURRAS*, L'AVENIR DE L'INTELLIGENCE)

L'avenir de l'intelligence
Was where? Was in whose head? Jefferson's?
Has Calvin Coolidge heard of it? We go back
To the second President, his term aborted,
President Adams whom the young Republic
Put out of office when he would have taught
Uses for emulation. It is Spring.
Beyond the Mississippi the snow melts
At last, and at the edges of small towns
As the chill sun westers in the silence, streets
Are streets of lake-pavilions, where the shadows
In the long yards are water or else like water.

And that would have been the time for it, before
The open door and the squalid openings westward
Postponed, dissolved, and obviated. Spring!
When the Atlantic states were all the states,
Their Cincinnatus, Washington. When Adams
Writes of the laticlave, angusticlave
And praetext; and the chairs of ivory;
Also the civil and the mural crowns
Of gold; of ivory; of flowers; of
Herbs; of laurel branches; and of oak leaves,
Adams and Washington are the names of streets
Where one rides by, his eyes indifferent, watchful . . .
"He that has power to hurt and will do none."

John Adams quoted Shakespeare, and that's much.
One gropes to a theory of the potentate
As cynosure. The dog's tail wags the dog
"Whose worth's unknown although his height be taken."

Was ever better use made of the passion
For consideration than the Romans made?
Adams asked, thinking of stone and bronze.
Consideration (or to be of note)
Is it a passion? Adams said it was,
And universal. Not in England. There
To be distinguished is a kind of horror
For the many whose strength is union.

And whose hand shot McKinley? If the realm
Is all a spectacle, the North Star even
(Called "cynosure," that's "dog's tail," in the Greek),
Assassin is a civic dignity.

Columbian Minerva! See the purchased
Scholars and wits of the Old World perform
Gladiatorial for your famished young!
In a Republic no one knows his place.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Tour of Duty

I AM PLEASED that almost every time I am almost run over, the aggressive vehicle is a Rolls Royce. So terror is touched with elegance for pedestrians of all classes. At home, the same sort of narrow squeak is a comparatively graceless affair.

AT THE FAMOUS Knightsbridge department store, women who want to relieve themselves take part in a small ceremony. The penny is handed to the attendant. *She* puts it in the slot, *she* enters the cubicle first and, in two quick, practised gestures, flushes the toilet and wipes the toilet seat with her towel. One attendant, one towel, from seat to seat, hundreds in a lunch hour. A refinement beyond the staphylococcus, a largesse of infection. Rivalling, perhaps surpassing, that thoughtful though less personal service in other coverts, the one towel hung on a hook beside the chain. Run, run to the toilet in the park, encased in green shrubs like the last awful meaning of a tragic poem, scented by truth. Shutting the door reveals on its inner surface the lengthy graffito: names and addresses of the out-patient clinics ready to deal with the disease to which you now extend hospitality.

MRS. MINCHAM came first to say her daughter's fiancé had one of our dustbins. He returned it, on a moonless night. Why had he sought it out? An alien, unfathomable culture. Mrs. Mincham was not sought out, she came with the house. We did not advertise in a shop window for her, though she met that negative requirement in Hornsey: "No coloured." She was white, with a minute delicate tracery of yellow in the skin, the hair, the eyeballs. Something of the East, of Nehru, about her work costume—the white tunic, the wide golden belt, the loose pyjama-like trousers, the nylons rolled to the ankles. Years of English stage butlers, brought only by torture to utter a single "Yes, madam," had not prepared us for Mrs. Mincham. Like Sartre, she was bent on a dialogue. Partners failing, she resorted to pure sound. Her fusion with noise passed understanding: at the instant she gave birth, during the war, two bombs exploded in the hospital garden. Now doors banged, lamps fell over, pans screeched in pain, all taps turned Niagara, the Hoover roared. She sang, her aged voice proclaimed like a death rattle her continued being. Song gave way to cough—hacking, prolonged, hideously expulsive. My husband listened downstairs, I listened upstairs. Sometimes we met secretly, ashen, faint, exchanging mute gestures of hysteria.

TWICE OWNER OF BAD DOGS, muddy, barksome, thieving and vagrant, I know these models rebuke their memory. Dense decorum obscures the breeds: was it a spaniel or a pug that held open the reading room door for me? If such dogs, in their multitudes, didn't defecate on the sidewalks, they could be only Platonic: excrement is their affecting mark of mortality, their engagement with matter. Not defecating, they walk like mechanised Dresden beside their owners. The leash is a gratuitous touch, a vestige like the human toenail of pre-history when dogs had wills and sent men up tree-trunks. These contemporary corgies, pacing the chill boulevards, wear mufflers, jackets, Wellingtons. (Mine always refused to dress, tearing around naked as Galapagians in all seasons.) And they shop with indefatigable patience. At Peter Jones, Attila sits beside his mistress in the shoe department. His ascot is somewhat askew and his tongue lolls out eleven inches with boredom, but he respects the intricacies of choice. He does not deserve that snub at Harrods, where he is told not to take the escalator. At a teashop down the street he is mollified: the entrance is flanked by two dishes lettered DOG and filled with the water of the day. In Highgate, leukemic varieties, fatigued by the marketing round, share the basket with the Hovis and the joint. On Sloane Street, master unlocks the private park, Blossom is put down on the gravel path. She runs around five times, urinating twice (on the third and fourth laps). Back into master's arms, gate relocked, pop into *the boot* of the car. Even the lust for oxygen, then, has been subdued? On the Heath the dogs are unleashed and romp self-consciously, like picnicking curates. Two romps intersect, a dog faces a dog, tails flick, ears lift in a moment of tiny expectancy. Two whistles sound, down tails, down ears, both back to the mime of single dogs taking the air. In their day, my dogs tried to mount all small objects (barring ants which they ate) moving close to the ground, especially three-year-old boys. These dogs don't even mount each other. And yet: the indisputable puppies. How were the parents cajoled into so bestial an act? An Ur-Dog pill at the vet's, fifteen minutes of libido, then home to wicker basket and pound-cake crumbs and the six o'clock news. Their training! The glory of a higher civilisation than I shall ever know. Born, as must be, roly-poly, incontinent, keen of sense, these dogs are, by their first birthday, citizens. Furry, yes—but responsible,

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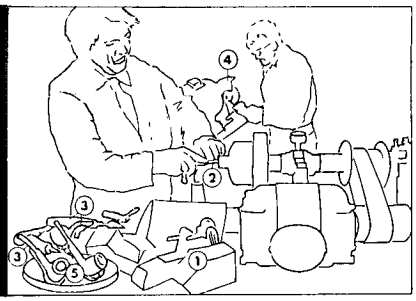
THE BRIAR PIPE MAKER



IN THE LOVELY Northamptonshire village of Litchborough, within easy reach of the motorway M.1 and Sulgrave Manor, the ancestral home of George Washington, briar pipes of the finest quality are still individually made by skilled craftsmen. Address: R. Martin, Farthingstone Road, Litchborough, Northants. (Shell Touring Map No. 3 from your Shell dealer.)

In 1890, Thomas Richard Martin returned from his apprenticeship to a London pipe-maker in order to make with loving care his own faultless briar pipes. Today, his son Richard has developed a thriving village industry making pipes of some seventy different shapes.

The briar, or bruyére, from which pipes are made is the root of a white heath shrub "erica arborea" found growing in Algeria, Greece, Corsica and Southern Italy. Briar is imported in roughly shaped pieces called ébauchons **1**. These are roughly shaped, bored and faced on swiftly revolving machines whose complex knives require a skilled and practised eye to set them to the hairsbreadth accuracy which ensures perfect turning and boring **2**. Flocking machines drill and face the wood of the stem and of the bowl and finally turn the ebonite stems **3**, of diverse shapes, to fit the pipe exactly. Finishing processes involve endless smoothing on a sandpapering machine **4**, polishing, staining, burning, varnishing and repolishing in order to produce the smooth and mirror-like bowls **5**, which show to the best advantage the rare 'straight' or 'birds eye' grains which delight the connoisseur.

England and Wales have many such skilled craftsmen. You can write for a list to the Rural Industries Bureau, 35 Camp Road, Wimbledon Common, London, S.W.19.

Also, the free monthly leaflet 'Go Shell' covering local events and information in your area is available from your Shell station.

Illustration : Hofbauer

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judicious, stoic in every queue. They deserve the vote, the steady little souls, and if they had had it in time Sir Alec Douglas-Home would have been in by a landslide.

GOD PLANNED eleven opossums to a birth, then miscounted and gave the mum ten teats. In His first dream of the English, he envisaged them as well-to-do, then forgot to give them all fortunes. We must long for the restoration of His design: the rich are often the handsomest rich to be envied anywhere, the poor are always the ugliest poor. Two unemployed Negroes fill the doorway of a Harlem drugstore with sullen grace. A slum child, eating grapes, stands poised in the Roman sunlight. But English poverty rejects moments of compromise with inequity. It is steadfastly pinched, pasty, pimpled, dirty. Insistently, it decays the teeth, greases the hair, chaps and scabs. It repeats all day long: we should have been given more, we weren't supposed to look like this.

AMERICAN T.V. is always pushing the will to live. Lovely parents of twenty-four embrace as they watch their adolescent daughter give away her microscope to a poor Puerto Rican boy. Goggled grandmas leap off their Lambrettas to sip a delicious infusion of Salada tea bags. The English television is more honest. It allows that human life is dreary and disappointing: it seeks only to imitate it. A children's quiz show: plain little creatures tell their names and their ambitions, listen to their questions, and then after grotesque deliberation give the wrong answers. The same tag of music sweeps each dullard away and replaces him with another. Not one gets an answer, not one wins a canoe. Infinite vistas of incapacity! Our girls play this game in the car. They ask each other questions, they give each other wrong answers, together they sing the little tune signifying oblivion.

We prefer the evening plays. They open invariably with the married couple in bed together. The wife looks comfy enough, but almost at once the husband gets abstracted, his blandishments grow half-hearted. In ten minutes she senses that something is not right. They begin to talk. Everybody knows then they're in bed in Liverpool; just what's bugging them is a bit trickier. Gradually single words come across. He wants to get up. She wants to stay in bed. If he wants to get up so much, he must not love her so much. But it's nothing personal: he wants to get up to go and run for political office. Liverpool needs him, it's just a matter of persuading the party chiefs to take him on. They're meeting in ten minutes. He's *got* to get up. [Scene shifts: the meeting.] The wife is dressed and waiting in an anteroom, which is also a bar. The husband darts in and out of the committee meeting. A dash of Lord Snow in there, pigeon-holes of power, asthmatic conflict, shouting. The wife interviews, intermittently, the men who slip out for a quickie. They are uniformly struck by her mounting sagacity. At last the husband does not get the nomination. But the wife has learned it is better to be up and failing than lolling about in bed. And the husband has learned that she is more than merely beautiful and passionate. She will be at his side in every abortive undertaking of his life.

PRECIOUS IN CONCEPTION but staunch in defiance of its milieu, the drying cupboard. A niche of Californian night, where sheets and pillow cases lie down to sleep. Like an unborn litter they lie, folded upon themselves, warm, separate, silent, absolved for a term from the exposure all island life must bear. But the hazard!—to flaunt this pleasure, this pathogenic attraction before impressionable women. In hypnotic trance Mrs. Clive Beament, of 92 Musky Dell, High Barnet, admits: "I have wanted ever so much, for ever so long, to be a tea towel and lie in my cupboard." And tumbling to a lower depth of the insentience syndrome, Mrs. D. F. M. Puddyfoote, of 43 Mill Dew Mews, Chelsea, longs to be smothered under her tea cosy. Aping her betters, Mrs Auberon Tooth, of 2½ Puddle Lane, Kentish Town, wants to be one of the make-believe coals (blushed by a concealed light bulb) under the coil of electric heat in her fireplace. Little things kept snug, cuddled in warmth, dried by loving chilblained hands. The inanimate spared all pain by the animate. The disparity pelts on all sensibilities, and quite inundates the less stable.

OUR LANDLORD is a reproduction, moderately priced, of a fine old piece, the Chippendale civil servant in foreign parts. Business instead of empire, but still a smell of synthetic Kipling. We tour his premises together. We pass in transit neat preparatory piles of tinned fruit cakes (whiskied) from Fortnum's, the kind British Publications, Inc., sell in the States at Christmastime. Also bottles of angostura bitters. So many bottles, such big bottles, of bitters: they cast a seductive light on the landlord's impending exile. But on second thought, that fruit cake in Zimbabwe. In the sitting-room we review the trials of directing native unskilled labourers in Muscat. Penchant of these fellows for nationalising foreign businesses. Tennis court in the compound, just rolled when the queer birds confiscate the rackets. British couples, their jaws still working on nuts and raisins, batted like balls from outpost to outpost. We waggle our heads, we seem

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to feel. In truth, it's ages since our own Cingalese scullion stole the fridge, and what I mourn now are the two wallpaper patterns in the room. I could well up over either, singly. The two of them, Goneril and Regan, glued there for the next ten months. We and the landlord part, striking exemplary notes in our respective roles. Time passes: we see *Uncle Vanya*, we learn to love beetroot. In June, we hand the inventory man all eighteen Cornish ashtrays, unscathed, but through his glass he sights a crack in the wash basin. We baulk at twenty pounds more, and so tap that old reflex again: our landlord advises the agent by letter (from Gao? from Brasilia?) to be cautious in the future of accepting "prospective tenants from the U.S.A." Well! we know no American not ready to lay down his money for his country. We pay, and at this moment native labour is being trained to heave out that blemished basin. Our finest cheque. A pity, though—it might have bought ten tinned blood puddings to munch on afternoons in Kuwait.

STILL ANOTHER LESSON, Tuesdays at two, in hierarchy: the hairdresser's. King of this hillock, the proprietor. Tall as the Pope, moustached, spiffy in tweed. He sits with the money (where his tea is brought him), he impales bills on an inverted nail, he arranges the transportation of crones. Rarely he leaves his post to attack children's hair. His staff: three women. Pale and fat, ballooning sleazy blue overalls. Their hair, improbable silver, unforeseeable gold. None of the customers takes this cue: its utter abandon is working-class. Beneath these glittering officers, the one apprentice. Her own hair is still mouse-brown. She sweeps up others' hair from under the seats. She files raincoats and umbrellas. She makes and brings the tea to her four superiors. (Customers are given last month's *Queen*.) She runs out in the weather for beer, which the three use for setting hair. She hands rollers, one at a time, to one of the three, at the instant a hank of beered hair is chosen to be rolled. Except perhaps in sweeping, she does not touch hair: a privilege of the fifth year of indenture. Laughter in the establishment has its only spring in her not being where she is wanted. The sallies run in a polished groove of references: to sleeping sickness, to babies dropped on their heads, to excesses by night. She answers only to say she's doing *this*, which explains why she hasn't yet done *that*. As she turns away, though, her look is solid: brief and furtive, but firmly malevolent. The earth's look of the last. But once, up from the little barber shop below ground level, the barber comes begging for change. Faultlessly, like birds come home, the staff swoops down. Landing, they sing the diurnal song of refusal, ditty of all shops:

No

Sir (or Madam), your request is too strange,
We shop people never make change.
We enjoy nothing less
Than the nod, the worm Yes!
We refuse,
We refuse,
We refuse.

Fool (or cretin), no use to insist,
Compliance is struck from our list.
Groan, grovel or shout
We'll not put ourselves out,
We refuse,
We refuse,
We refuse.

On the dying fall, the barber starts back downstairs with his pound note in his hand. The apprentice, unmoved, learning to sing in silence, glances after him as he goes.

Mary Ellmann

Letter from Japan

The Naked Festival

POLICEMEN with loud-hailers and walkie-talkies are holding up the lines of traffic which converge on the village. In spite of our official flag, we are told to leave the car at the main road. It will be ten minutes' walk, they say. Half an hour later we are still picking our way over raw earth, planks and unfinished drainage works. People here do not like to ask the way, and we are twice deceived into following groups who move steadily off in the wrong direction.

The surrounding landscape is flat, combining large industrial installations with the strawy, muddy and wooden world of agricultural Japan. Then we discover that the shrine is marked by coloured balloons, like small barrage balloons, with advertisements trailing from them, outlined against the middle distance and the uncertain February sky. Soon there are crowds everywhere, charabanc parties, old ladies in kimono, piggyback babies, some midday drunks. Soon, too, appears the first bunch of "naked men": their limbs and chests are indeed naked, but they wear the *fundoshi* that wrestlers wear, a garment something between a cummerbund and diaper, which loops up

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between the buttocks and ties with a decorative knot at the coccyx. This is chilly equipment for weather not far above freezing, and they have been warming up with *sake*. They leer and make faces at the foreigners, being obliged like all drunks in groups to act more humorous than they feel. Each year they come from Konomiya and the local villages and for them the festival will become a terrific test of endurance—as indeed so much of life becomes for the Japanese.

For the past three weeks the *Shinotoko*, the "god-man" who is chosen every year at this village, has been holed up in a special part of the shrine. Today, the period of his purification ended, he can bless the devotees who appear before him. But first they throw coins and clap their hands discreetly to attract the attention of the *Kami*. *Kami* are not exactly gods—more like spirits. *Shinto* is not exactly a religion—more like an institutional survival. Nowadays its mysteries are perhaps no more interesting than those of Elks or Buffaloes or Knights of Columbus. But it can still turn on a pretty good festival if it wants to, and anyone will agree with your estimate of the number here today. A hundred thousand? I think so. A quarter of a million? I think so.

But with neat black heads and tidy figures, a crowd in this country is always attractive. Quiet and good-tempered people mass round the shrine, round the open booths selling strange foods that smell of hot glue, round fortune tellers and vendors of pillows of candyfloss in plastic bags. For good luck, people tie coloured ribbons on to themselves and on to the trees in the shrine precincts. Fortune, not Faith, is the prime mover of the festival.

We pay to enter one of the big stands near the thatched gateway. Here there is matting to kneel on, and whole families are picnicking. Two or three of the grannies in kimono are wielding cine-cameras. But so far there is nothing much to see, except when the crowd below us parts and a cluster of "naked men" bearing branches and shouting *"Washoi! Washoi!"* rushes through to the shrine. Rain starts to fall and the proprietor of the stand hands out free sheets of polythene for his guests to wrap themselves up in. Two hours must pass before the climax of the festival and, having secured our places, we would like to get out, because kneeling or squatting is fearfully uncomfortable. Very soon, too, we would like to escape from Mr. Yamakawa Osamu.

In his different incarnations, he turns up fairly frequently in Japan. He belongs to a type hard to defend even to such habitual attackers as Embassy wives, who seem to regard this remarkable country and its people as a personal insult to themselves. Mr. Yamakawa's bespectacled head suggests a bluebottle's, a million times magnified and rather sticky-looking. He presents his name card: he works for a local newspaper. Yes, he speaks a little English. He would like to interview us. How old are we?

Fortunately it takes some time for Mr. Yamakawa to digest information and to generate enough English for further questions. Meanwhile the rain stops, police clear the crowd from the route below us and put up barriers. Now larger and larger groups of *fundoshi*-clad young men, their place of origin identifiable by bright little bandeaus round their heads, come charging up and carry branches of eucalyptus and leafy bamboo stems into the shrine. Their antics begin to infect the spectators with excitement. Cameras are clicking all round and overhead the two helicopters from the television companies sweep lower. When Mr. Yamakawa asks "Why are you here?" the answer seems obvious but difficult to express. Of course one would like to explain about the principle of the "scapegoat" involved in the selection of the *Shinotoko*, but one's memory of *The Golden Bough* (Abridged Edition) is rather dim. With its purification rites, and its emphasis on luck rather than virtue, the Konomiya festival recalls *Candomble*, the form of Voodoo found in northern Brazil. But this comparison would surely never please Mr. Yamakawa.

Instead, we let him take our photographs.

Since the rain the temperature has dropped still further: three policemen have had to remove one struggling participant who has consumed too much in his efforts to keep warm. *Washoi! Washoi! Washoi!* They are coming in waves now; for about two hundred yards down the enclosed way you can see the mass of bodies, struggling and shoving and bearing still larger and more dishevelled stems of bamboo up to the shrine. Buckets of cold water are thrown over them, in order to keep up their sense of endurance. The spectators on the stands push forward with their cameras. Close at hand, Mr. Yamakawa persists; like a bluebottle in a room, he is quiet but refuses to be forgotten.

What, he asks, do we think of naked people?

Difficult, that one. But it is quite obvious what Mr. Yamakawa thinks. He thinks the whole thing is backward and shameful and he wishes the foreigners were in Nagoya, twenty minutes away by train, visiting an electronics factory. Nagoya, destroyed during the war by an earthquake and the American air force, has been rebuilt most hideously. It was a relief to

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leave it this morning, and tonight we are returning to Tokyo as quickly as possible.

The *fundoshi* are no longer white now and the brown limbs are bloomed with mud: it is like Twickenham, or the end of a cross-country run. Occasionally a cummerbund gets undone, and its owner twirls round to tighten it, while a friend holds on to the end. Has the *Shinotoko* left the shrine yet? Nobody knows. Like all its kind, the festival at Konomiya goes on much too long. If it goes on much longer, surely nobody will care.

More wooden buckets of cold water are carried from the shrine. The shouting increases. By now the final stage is reached: the *Shinotoko*, dressed in *fundoshi* exactly like the others, has entered the crowd at the farther end of the route; he must run the gauntlet up to the shrine. But there must be about fifteen hundred "naked men" trying to touch him on the way, perched on parapets and leaping down, pushing and forming scrimmages and shouting "*Washoi! Washoi!*" If they succeed in touching him, all their bad luck will be passed on to him. In a land of earthquakes, who can help believing in luck? But as to trusting to luck—surely the Japanese do that least of anyone on earth?

Where is he now, the god-man? Like a cheerful view of inferno, the whole mass is now shouting and writhing immediately below us, doused with cold water and giving off steam and a sweet strawy smell of rice-wine. Sometimes it seems he is on one side, and hands shoot up and beckon, and sometimes on another. All around cameras are whirring and clicking. The helicopters sweep down overhead. The interwoven mass surges slowly towards the big gateway to the shrine, and then they are sucked rapidly through, like the last suds down a drain. It is over.

TONIGHT THE god-man will transfer his weight of ill-fortune to one of the unleavened rice-cakes which function so prominently in Shintoism. And the rice-cake, thus transubstantiated by its burden of calamity, will be buried secretly in the unlucky earth. But, for the crowd, it is over. The naked men already look shivery and purposeless. Nothing disperses so quickly about its business as a Japanese crowd. Cameras are packed away, tripods are folded up, flash-bulbs unscrewed. In a moment or two all the stands are empty.

Mr. Yamakawa, however, is still buzzing around. Do we think, he asks, that such ceremonies will survive into the modern age?

We decide that they will, at least as long as there are cameras in Japan.

Frank Tuohy

The Erotic Society

By Maurice Girodias

MR. GEORGE STEINER'S article entitled "Night Words: High Pornography and Human Privacy" [ENCOUNTER, October] introduces the very newest argument against freedom of expression.

Although his approach to that old subject does not facilitate discussion, there is no doubt that Mr. Steiner is very concerned by it—intimately, emotionally concerned I would even say. Furthermore, as he rests most of his arguments on a book I edited, *The Olympia Reader*, itself an anthology of authors I have published, I feel twice responsible for the discomfort he appears to have suffered, and I welcome the opportunity to reply.

From the start Mr. Steiner makes it plain that he is against the licence to write and print (and read) what he calls pornography. What makes me a little uneasy is that he calls *pornography* practically any piece of writing in which erotic activities are described with any clarity. The only distinction he makes is between "high pornography" and stuff of a more vulgar, mercantile nature; but one cannot say which class he loathes more, "high" or "low" pornography. One may even suppose (although he does not say it in so many words) that he feels more strongly about "high pornography" because it is more insidious, more clever, and more likely to seduce and captivate the innocent reader: *i.e.*, himself.

Pornography is an ugly and silly word, which I regret to see used so profusely and indiscriminately by men of culture and good sense. It belongs to the constant vocabulary of those who want to avoid the real debate; it is the stink-bomb of political meetings. Calling a book like *Lolita* "high pornography" will not solve any problems.

However, this is only a device of secondary

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importance; what should concern us is the main thesis. The description of sexual scenes in modern fiction, Mr. Steiner argues, interferes with our erotic freedom; it superimposes foreign images on our secret dreams; it invades our subconscious lusts.

> Sexual relations [he writes] are, or should be, one of the citadels of privacy.... The new pornographers subvert this last, vital privacy; they do our imagining for us. They take the words that were of the night and shout them over the rooftops, making them hollow. The images of our love-making, the stammerings we resort to in intimacy, come pre-packaged.

And he concludes: "In the name of human privacy, enough!"

This point of view has at least the merit of originality, but in getting there we must note that he has not hesitated to change horses in mid-stream. At first his quarrel with pornography, high and low, is simply that it is totally unimaginative, that it does "not extend in any real sense the range of our sexual being.... The total modes of intercourse are fundamentally finite. The mathematics of sex stops somewhere in the region of *soixante-neuf*...." What, then, is the real nature of Mr. Steiner's grievance against what he calls pornography? Is it too much—or not enough?

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, freedom of expression has made historic progress in Britain as well as in America, particularly since Roy Jenkins' 1959 "Obscenity Bill" became law in England. But what strikes me is how quickly people forget that they have not always lived under the present régime of relative tolerance.

The fight for freedom is not yet won, and already we have intellectuals protesting against too much liberty. We have, for instance, Mr. Steiner protesting against general freedom in the name of his own, private freedom. Must we really abandon those shaky conquests? Must we return to the past? I am sure Mr. Steiner himself would not like to face the ugly state of things which would result from his own propositions.

We must not forget the damages caused to culture and artistic creation under the long reign of censorship. How short can our memory be that we today so easily dismiss the degrading tribulations of *Ulysses*?—the repugnant treatment of writers like Oscar Wilde or D. H. Lawrence?; the hollow verdicts handed down by magistrates who were dealing with writers as if they were low criminals?; the shameful harassment of authors, publishers, and even of simple readers, by squads of illiterate policemen, customs officials, and bigoted citizens?

Must we really have that again? Mr. Steiner cannot seriously claim that he would rather restore the smug domination of the censors than suffer those alleged infringements of his erotic privacy. We know that freedom is bound to be abused, to bring its own excesses; but the reason is simply that its advent has been delayed far too long.

Naturally, I am not merely thinking of the freedom to print four-letter words, but of the right to intellectual independence. Moral and cultural freedom are normal complements of political liberties. The issue is not restricted to literature, to the *littérateur*'s literature, that dead thing.

And that is precisely why the debate has taken such enormous importance. On each side of the fence, those who fight for freedom of expression as well as those who fight against it are perfectly conscious of what is at stake—which is not merely the right to print or read dirty books. There is much more to it.

The early Communist ideologists in Russia promoted "free love" as one of the ideals of the new socialist era. But the revolution soon disposed of that idle dream, and a strict moral order was imposed on the masses: a logical move, if we consider the central role played by erotic facts and dreams in the human make-up. To enforce civil discipline it is indispensable for each citizen to understand that he owes to the State every one of his liberties, from the tiniest to those which matter most. In fact that method of mass control was first inaugurated not by the Communists, but by the Christian Church. The Catholic method of control as exercised by the priest in the confessional punishes any breach of the rule of chastity, any impure thoughts, with a catalogue of terrifying sanctions. No better system of domination of the masses by a self-appointed *élite* has yet been invented.

The same system has been put in practice by every strong political régime, from China to Spain, from Portugal to, alas, contemporary France. The same system has been applied, although in a more diluted manner, by every new society in its formative period, when an intense effort was required of the masses, and where a strong governing class imposed its rule on the ignorant populace—as in England during all of the industrial era.

But in a maturing society the rights of the individual gradually regain precedence. The phenomenon is particularly remarkable in England today, probably because Victorian repression was so intolerably priggish. The smouldering fire has suddenly erupted into a beautiful explosion, shattering all the windows of the Establishment. Fire has issued forth from the

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loins of one Mellors, from Molly Bloom's libido; fire has erupted from Henry Miller's mammoth groin, from William Burroughs' spastic mannikins. This is war, this is revolution.

Mr. Steiner, a lonely Canute-like figure, wants to hypnotise the rising ocean into obedience. Like Canute, he had better learn how to swim in a tempest.

I MUST CONCEDE that Mr. Steiner is right at least in one respect: it is true that the present revolution has unleashed torrents of bad taste. That, naturally, had to be anticipated; indeed the very violence of the movement only gives a further indication of the enormous volume of pent-up pressures, of its inevitability. To some delicate souls, it is quite understandable that the accompanying vulgarity may appear unbearable. However, what revolution has ever been achieved without such a display of colourful atrocities?

The sudden rupture of censorship rules has provoked a train of nauseous consequences which some may find evil, and others merely comical. The curiosity of the reading public (on all levels) for the formerly outlawed literature has had formidable effects. It has immediately generated a new type of "sex fiction" which one may find obscene more by virtue of its stupidity than because of its over-all content.

It does not take much talent to write or sell that type of story, and it has become very fast the object of a thriving industry on both sides of the Atlantic. In America, rusty gangsters who had been inactive since prohibition days have proudly turned themselves into publishers.[1]

AS TO THE poor professional men who had spent their lifetime in the service of literature, they wrinkled their noses in disgust, protested with well-bred vehemence, then thought again, and finally, in their turn, stampeded in pursuit of the Unholy Golden Fleece.

May I humbly admit that I am fully aware of my personal responsibility in helping to start that movement, which might well have been deferred another five or ten years without the bad example set by my Paris-printed erotica? . . . I could easily invoke for my defence that I hired only intelligent and competent writers, and that the material I published was never more than parodies of "the real thing," designed to make fun of the censors more than anything else; and also that my marginal activities helped save a number of respectable works from everlasting obscurity. But I prefer to resort to a simpler justification even if it sounds foolish to some. Why should "sex fiction" be condemned as immoral, and "thrillers" be described as civilised entertainment? Must we thrive on violence, treachery (those activities indicative of perverted sexuality)—or should we not rather enjoy peacefully, and with no feeling of guilt, the pleasures we may derive from a liberated libido?

Les Anglo-Saxons

I FIND *Steiner's reasoning very confused, and his point of view strikes me as being American in a scientific way. He discusses only pornographic literature, and on certain points he is in the right. It is undeniable that pornographic books are tedious, but if some people like to read them, I see no harm in their doing so. It is also undeniable that there are only thirty-two positions; but that does not prevent the existence of either marriage or eroticism, and Malraux, who saw value in eroticism, said that it was valid from a literary point of view.*

I think Steiner is talking about one thing and we are talking about another. For instance, he doesn't mention L'Histoire d'O., *which, for me, is the one and only erotic book. The reason is that literary eroticism is unimaginable for an Anglo-Saxon. The English language may be very rich in technical terms but it is very deficient for the expression of ideas, sensations, and shades of meaning. Something which is an image in Pauline Réage's writing, for instance, can only be translated into English by the use of blunt, coarse terms. Like the Chinese, the Anglo-Saxons have no erotic literary language. If, as Steiner's article suggests, there is at the moment a wave of literary eroticism in the United States, it can only be pornographic.*

The interesting thing about eroticism is not the existence of the thirty-two positions, but what goes on inside people's heads, the way in which lovers react to each other. And when Steiner complains that our dreams "are marketed wholesale" by pornographic literature, his remark is an interesting one but it can prompt the objection that literature has never done anything else but market dreams, and one wonders why this particular critic attaches more importance to his erotic dreams than to the other kinds.

Jean-Jacques Pauvert
Publisher, LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE D'EROTOLOGIE *(Paris)*

[1] I met one such publisher from the West Coast recently who proudly boasted to me that he had had Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* "entirely translated from the Latin at enormous expense"; and he referred to his competitors as "a bunch of fly-by-night operators." Another publisher of the same water handed me, with lordly poise, a beautifully embossed visiting card on which his own name was grossly misspelt.

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I can already hear the usual sniggers, but I shall stick to my point until someone explains clearly why I am wrong. If we really must have a system of morals to govern our lives, at least let it be logical and understandable to all.

By simply reviewing a few of our most banal beliefs, we quickly discover how attached we are to some rather extravagant lies, simply because they were instilled into us from earliest childhood. We have been taught that pleasure is wrong and pain noble; that sex is ugly and war a terrible experience as well as being, for some unfathomable reason, both unavoidable and soul-lifting.... The catalogue is endless of the wrong evaluations with which our minds are crippled through education: and certainly the most irritating one is our guilty attitude towards pleasure.

Mr. Steiner will not agree with me, and I do not expect him to; but to me anything must be allowed to be published if it procures pleasure to *some* readers. After all, reading is precisely the one cultural activity in which we may engage without affecting other people's freedom.

Should that not mean that we are at liberty to choose our own reading material as we wish, according to our tastes, however perverted they may be?

THE UNCERTAIN QUALITY of contemporary sex fiction, high and low, is, in short, a regrettable but understandable phenomenon. We cannot with any precision decide what will come later in the light of the first, uninformed experience of freedom, but it seems fair to predict that, with publicity and competition, writers and publishers will soon become more constructive and more discriminating. Finally, one may predict that sexual themes will be integrated into fiction, not as a scandalous ingredient, but as one of its natural components. Good and bad novels will be written, good and bad poems as well; but at least what will follow will come as a more truthful assessment of life as it is, as a more honest evaluation of the human predicament, and of its boundless poetic developments.

GEORGE ELIOT, according to Mr. Steiner, should remain as our model for restraint and discretion. Anything having to do with anyone's private sorrows should be described by allusion ("through the simile of a dying flame, of ash cooling in the grate, a perception of sexual defeat which each of us can re-live or detail for himself...") as Tolstoy masterfully conveyed in *Anna Karenina*. Stendhal and Henry James are lauded for their allusive

Impoverishment?

As is well known, what is called erotic literature—a form of writing produced by specialists—has rarely any connection with literature. The fact that it may delight schoolboys or elderly gentlemen is a matter of concern only to the authorities or to societies for the defence of public morality. It is not this that George Steiner is talking about.

His attack is directed against writers and a form of literature too preoccupied, he thinks, with sexual matters. This is the literature that he terms erotic, while granting that it has some aesthetic quality. However, he considers it to be thin, monotonous, shut in upon itself, and he denounces and condemns it.

Actually, it is not easy to see which writers in particular he is attacking. De Sade, the eternal scapegoat? Obviously, although the least perspicacious reader can see that de Sade's purpose in writing was hardly to stimulate the sexual appetite. Henry Miller? Even his fellow-countrymen have actually come to realise that he transcends this category. Such French writers as Georges Bataille and Pierre de Mandiargues? Bataille published certain of his works in clandestine editions, but they do him honour. The American William Burroughs? No doubt, although his sexual obsessions constitute just as acceptable a kind of literary material as the hunger fantasies of one of Knut Hamsun's heroes. Is there any writer worthy of the name who is purely and exclusively erotic? Even Jean Genet...?

The truth is that those modern writers whom Steiner attacks en bloc *are concerned —sometimes even without deliberate intent— to restore sexual behaviour to its proper place in total human behaviour. Why should love—which forms the principal or subsidiary subject of eight novels out of ten— stop at the edge of the bed, around which the curtains are then drawn? Those writers whom the critic is attacking may offend against orthodox morality but they certainly do not offend against literature, whose function has been, and will be until further notice, to "explore the human heart" or, to put it in contemporary terms, all the manifestations of being. The way in which people make love may tell us more about them than any searching analysis could. It, too, reveals a form of truth which is interesting because it is usually concealed.*

What Mr. Steiner considers to be an impoverishment of literature might more accurately be thought an enrichment. But even intelligent critics may sometimes disguise their moral susceptibilities as literary judgments. The existing censorship laws could well have done without such support or justification.

Maurice Nadeau
Editor, LES LETTRES NOUVELLES *(Paris)*

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method, so superior to the open treatment of our contemporary "douche-bag idylls." It seems that nothing more modern has ever found grace in Mr. Steiner's judgment.

He does not mention one single writer of our century as tolerable. Even those who appear to show certain promise ruin themselves in his eyes because of their trivial treatment of human passions. "In *Lolita* there is a genuine enrichment of our common stock of temptations": and that is all he has to say about that particular book.... At the same time his compulsive use of crude imagery ("one can eat excrement or quaff urine," "there just aren't that many orifices," "things have remained fairly generally the same since man first met goat and woman...") is somewhat in conflict with all the preaching about descriptive modesty. Surely George Eliot would have had no need of such verbalisation to convey her subtle message.

But Mr. Steiner still has to face the well-rehearsed argument against censorship: repression may have impoverished literature; and he does not avoid that dangerous issue. He bravely evokes "the profoundly revealing, striking fact that there is hardly a major writer of the 19th or 20th centuries who has not, at some point in his career, be it in earnest or in the deeper earnest of jest, produced a pornographic work." But he hastens to add: "Nevertheless, with very few exceptions, high pornography is *not* of pre-eminent literary importance. . . . It merges, almost imperceptibly, into the dream-trash of straight, mass-produced pornography."

The very existence of this mass of erotica written clandestinely by most of the important modern poets and novelists is, indeed, "profoundly revealing." But it is only fair to add that its over-all mediocrity may be attributed only to the circumstances in which those writings were produced. Their very existence does reveal the natural urge of any author, including the most gifted ones, to write about sex—sex being a reality for a gifted author as well as for anyone else. But the humiliating obligation of secrecy, the lack of publicity, of comparison, of public criticism and acknowledgment, were conditions in which no great work of art could easily be conceived. Those self-conscious authors were themselves the mental slaves of the prejudices generated by their era, and to them sex was either naughty or frightening: hence the "deeper earnest of jest."

Should we wonder that nothing brilliant has emerged from that clandestine activity? The reason, contrary to Mr. Steiner's conclusions, is not that erotic themes are unworthy of the honest novelist; the reason is that no artist can work constructively under the everlasting threat of public prosecution.

IF MOLIÈRE'S Tartuffe lived in our century he would be an active censor, or at least a devoted partisan of moral censorship.

I have already mentioned the political function of moral censorship under strong régimes. But such manipulations would be quite impossible if the anti-sex prejudice was not as powerful as it is in certain individuals, and usually among the most socially representative and respectable members of the community.

The French sociologist, Gaston Bouthoul, in his excellent essay on the origins of war, remarks that we never stop to analyse that obvious fact that wars are always set in motion by men far too old to risk their lives on the battlefield. In his view there is a strong element of sexual competition at work between the generations, which is clearly manifested in that manner. The ageing roosters, left alone in charge of the animal farm, welcome (even if unconsciously) that easy method of disposing of their younger rivals, whose blood is soon spent in the name of pride and virility. The psychology of the partisans of censorship obeys similar rules. The prudery which governs their beliefs and actions springs from a hidden source: a feeling of inadequacy, a sexual inferiority complex.

Sex fiction introduces a new character, the sex hero, a dream Hercules combined with a super-active Casanova, and his performances ridicule the puny efforts of the family man—who plunged into marriage to escape from sex. The revelations of sex fiction are a constant threat to the pride and moral comfort of the average suburban husband; they raise the level and quality of erotic performance right out of his reach, and he feels discredited and helpless. Would he feel so concerned about the demand or freedom of expression if the issue were purely philosophical? But to him it is a very personal, intimate matter that is being raised, involving his own self-confidence and his own male pride.

"The precarious uniqueness of each other's being...." "Two human beings in that attempt at total communication which is also communion...." Time and again Mr. Steiner indicates that to him the couple is an adequate and sufficient erotic horizon.

Is there any need to go further into the motives of his quarrel with freedom of expression?

WHAT WILL APPEAR to future historians as one of the strangest traits of our civilisation is no doubt our self-conscious attitude towards sex. Our Judeo-Christian heritage has reacted with an extreme negative violence to Freud's revelations concerning the central function of sex in the elaboration of the human character: and yet one cannot help but

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feel even to-day that it is not just a few sick individuals who should be directed to the analyst's couch, but our whole Western society.

When Mr Steiner writes: "The actions of the mind when we masturbate are not a dance; they are a treadmill," he is once more trying to persuade us that nothing but marital sex is legitimate and free of perversions.

Let us just consider our human situation for a minute. Nobody will deny, not even Mr. Steiner, that we are born from undifferentiated, unromantic lust and that we can only propagate our species through the same medium. Nobody can deny that, barring food and sleep, sex is a constant preoccupation for the adolescent or mature male or female. And I mean basic sex, simple, obvious sex. Distinguished marital copulation between sensitive literary persons is no doubt one of the highest types of sexual activity, but there are billions of men and women alive on this earth for whom such refinement is still far away. The conventions of civilised life have certainly distorted the image and complicated the practice, but the thing is still there, sex, at the root of every one of us (if I may use the image), although it is well hidden by layer upon layer of conventional hypocrisy. May I offer a few home-made examples to illustrate that observation?

Rape is held to be the most uncivilised form of assault on anyone's privacy. And yet the colourless family man, the sedate and faithful husband whose only memorable feminine conquest was performed through marriage, usually rapes dozens of girls a day. The possession, of course, is only visual; a quick appreciative glance is all there is to that micro-rape, which is always furtive and often even unconscious. But the action is there and it does yield a tiny dose of sexual satisfaction; its nature and purpose cannot be mistaken.... As to the faithful wife of that same man, does she resort to fashion, jewels, perfumes in order to seduce her own husband? Not at all: she uses all those classical artifacts because she wants to offer herself to the whole race of males, to seduce and be raped by all—visually of course. The vestigial impulses of prehistoric man are still at work.

Polygamy is rashly punished under our climates, and yet it is being constantly practised on a huge scale.... Buying virgins from their parents belongs in our view to the *mores* of the most primitive savage: and yet it is a current musical-comedy precept that money, when it is plentiful, will always buy youth and beauty.

We act, feel, hope, and dream according to the same ageless trends; and yet in public we pretend to be totally unaware of the influence of sex on our private and social lives. And every time we bravely reveal one of our little secrets, we do so only on the verge of discovery, and often to cover-up a more ugly one under an attitude of detachment and utter frankness.

But as long as sex remains one of our human characteristics, why should we think that it is degrading to admit as much?

FROM OUR UNICELLULAR, auto-generating ancestor, the amoeba, to the highest forms of animal life, evolution has invented sexuality and gradually brought it to the finest degree of differentiation. Then from the highest form of animal life to man, another empirical discovery has taken place; man has stolen away from the reproductive function most of the sexual forces meant for it, and dispersed them gaily to the winds for his own pleasure.

The notions of play, of speculation, of gratuitous pleasure, of poetic invention, spring from that movement of revolt against the endless chain of animal generation, against the slavish monotony of reproduction. The distance between reproductive sex and eroticism is the same as between the animal world and mankind.

We are erotic units, *homo eroticus*, related to an universe made entirely of similar units. The darkness of our brief life-span is illuminated by the erotic encounters with other units gravitating in the vicinity of our sphere of revolution; each of those units has established or will establish contact with still other units, and we are in that manner connected through our infinite erotic kinship to all the lands, to all the centuries of the human continuum.

We belong to an erotic society, more surely than to any race or nation. The erotic drive is our daily pulsation, the motivation of our tiniest movement, the very colour of our thoughts, the backbone of our hopes. The erotic impulse transcends and survives sex, to inspire the taste of food and the rising of cathedrals.

Because beauty—that fatal human dimension—is nothing if not the projection of the genetic drive common to a whole race of men. The perfection of human beauty is defined and explained not by reason, but only by the wordless messages we receive from our chromosomes. And it is only through our discovery, our appreciation of physical, human beauty that we may discover its mysterious correspondence with non-human forms of life. Art is doubly genetic by definition, as it requires both the creative impetus and the understanding of beauty.

I once saw a very old woman die. She had been young and beautiful, but as she neared the end of her century, her various passions and preoccupations had become simplified to an extreme: food was the only notion alive in her mind. The doctor said that she was so strong

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and healthy that she would live on, endlessly, if she were kept supplied with adequate quantities of nourishment. However, one day she refused to eat; she did not speak and kept to her bed. The doctor was called again and said there was absolutely nothing wrong. She was fit as a fiddle, but probably bored with herself. Then that same day I noticed that her pupils were fast losing their colour; a few days before they had still been a quite vivid brown, and now they were a whitish hue. My brother passed his hand over her eyes: she did not see a thing. The doctor came back later and repeated the same thing as before: she was not ill, she had just lost her last interest in food, her last link with life. She died soon after; Eros had deserted my grandmother.

She was, like everyone of us, a member of the erotic society, a Darwinian pagan; once lust had rounded her breast and brightened her eye; lust had now left her and her body was no more than a heap of disconnected molecules.

The End of Tory Ideology?

Towards New Political Values — By ANGUS MAUDE, M.P.

"I go back from age to age up to the remotest antiquity, but I find no parallel to what is occurring before my eyes; as the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity."

THIS IS true today. Whether it was true 130 years ago is less certain, for de Tocqueville had a disturbing habit of seeing the future already unrolled around him. Yet it has been said that the modern age began with the proof that the earth revolved round the sun—when man, in discovering the universe, discovered also that he could not trust the evidence of his own senses.

One must suppose that faith in the reliability of the direct experience of the human senses was once even stronger than faith in either God or human reason, and the shock of its shattering proportionately great. Nevertheless, it did not occur to the early rationalists that faith in human reason could ever suffer the same fate as the faith in God which it appeared to replace. Yet this faith, too, has been largely shattered. The first industrial revolution began the process, by seeming to destroy (in Hannah Arendt's words) "the priority of reason over doing, of the mind's prescribing its rules to the actions of men," for it "seemed to prove that man's doings and fabrications prescribe their rules to reason." The second industrial revolution has carried the process farther.

Certainly more and more people are beginning to question what had previously been for them an unquestionable faith in the power of human reason to guide mankind along the road of progress towards perfection. The result is that one of the great mainsprings of British political thought and action—perhaps the most important one—seems to be running down. It is not just that a particular system has proved inadequate in changed circumstances; it is becoming increasingly hard to place any faith in any system at all.

Nor are those who never put their faith in systems, and were sceptical of the power of human reason, in much better case. Even tradition has ceased to provide a framework or a guide for the lives of the majority. Those who believe themselves to be still guided and sustained by it are scarcely living in the real world at all. If it answers all their questions, it can only be because they have given up even asking most of the questions that matter.

THAT WE ARE LIVING on a dwindling capital of inherited ethical standards and political ideas

POLITICAL *parties in opposition often search for "intellectual clarification" and "new perspectives." Certainly the British Labour Party, in the 1950s, went through a dramatic process of "revisionism": and many of the articles published in these pages (especially those of C. A. R. Crosland) contributed to a significant reorientation.*

Now the Conservative Party is in something of a "spiritual crisis," deeply troubled by its own peculiar "end of ideology." It has sought a new leadership, is evidently groping towards a new restatement of policies and principles.

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may be no less true for having become a cliché. Certain historical processes do acquire a kind of automatism of their own; and if there is now little inclination to re-shape these processes or attempt to mould our own destinies, it is largely because there is no confidence that the attempt could be successful. Those individuals who are firmly sustained by a religious belief may be confident that only a religious revival could solve the problems arising from the "materialism" of the modern world; but they are without much confidence in the ability of the churches to bring about the revival.

Much more pathetic is the disillusionment of so many middle-aged and elderly radicals. The naïve belief is shattered, that the transfer of industries from private to public ownership would of itself produce a change of heart and behaviour in their workers and a perceptible improvement in productivity and standards of service to the public. Gone is the conviction that crime and prostitution are the products of poverty and would disappear when poverty was abolished. It was a mortifying discovery, too, that some workers actually appeared to enjoy the bourgeois materialism of the Affluent Society and were prepared to vote Tory in increasing numbers to secure it.

Yet the disappointment of the radicals is excessive, for nothing that has happened has either wholly discredited the assumptions of the Age of Reason or rendered nugatory the work of generations of radical reformers. Progress, almost undreamed-of progress, there has certainly been. The worst poverty has been abolished in many countries, and we can begin to say with some confidence that it will one day be abolished in all. In Britain, the impact of sickness and misfortune has been greatly lessened, inequalities of wealth have been reduced and thousands of families are prosperous, and see opportunities for their children, beyond what they ever imagined possible.

For many, perhaps for most, it has not seemed to add up to the ideal existence for which they hoped. Money brings worries to replace some of those it takes away. Leisure is less rewarding than might have been expected, just when there is also less satisfaction in work. What is it all for? Politics has become a matter of economics and the Welfare State; the first is too difficult, and the second a matter of organisation, to be looked after by Them. Foreign affairs have become something for the Americans and the Russians to sort out between them. There are no great causes to excite us. There does not seem to be anything very big and obvious that needs reforming. All this is essentially pessimistic, in its simple lack of faith, or interest, in the future of humanity.

IF THE FUTURE is uncertain, and its problems too large and complicated for serious contemplation, all can scarcely be well in the present. In fact, it is almost impossible to discover any signs of a general feeling of pride in our society. Yet people do take pride in a sound and successful society, just as they take pride in a sound and successful firm, or army unit, or football club. To quote de Tocqueville again, "in past times what most distinguished the English people from any other was its satisfaction with itself; then everything about its laws and its customs was good in its eyes." Nor is it any use saying—as some politicians do—that people ought to be proud of what has been achieved if they clearly aren't. It is as foolish to try to exhort them into feeling pride in our technological achievements, or in the social advances of the Welfare State, as it is to chide them for lack of patriotism because they no longer have a sense of national superiority or imperial mission. For surely the British people, despite the moralists' talk of their cynicism and materialism, have a pretty sound sense—political, social, and even moral. If they do not feel proud of their society, is it not overwhelmingly probable that society is in a somewhat unsatisfactory state?

Yet whatever fundamental abuses and injustices there may be, the majority of the people do not seem to be sufficiently conscious of them to make them the subject of a major political campaign. Why are politics so strangely, disconcertingly empty of such themes at the present time? The vague sense that things are not as they should be may in reality be a not wholly conscious impression that what we have is not a *society* at all.

The balance of society has, after all, been very greatly disturbed in the last fifty years, and particularly in the last twenty. We have not yet even come to terms with the immense social changes involved in the decline of the almost patriarchal family system of a hundred years ago, brought about by the change in the status of women and then by the assumption of State responsibility for the welfare of children. This has left many parents hopelessly uncertain where their own responsibilities end and those of the school-teacher (or even the policeman) begin. Then, whether you measure them in terms of social classes, economic forces and relationships, or individual status, there can be no doubt that immense structural shifts have taken place. These, too, have created uncertainties. Social differences seem to be based on no logical or comprehensible system at all.

MUCH OF OUR THINKING is still coloured by the fact that the Roman hierarchic structure of

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status (transmitted through the universal Church) endured virtually unchanged for many centuries and has left some strands still visible in the warp. Hopefully, perhaps even unconsciously, many people imagine that it might be possible and infinitely desirable for a new and enduring social hierarchy to emerge, guaranteeing stability and familiarity in the future. But this is surely one of the most futile of all dreams. Since the transitions are not yet completed, no adjustments made now can hold the position stable for any length of time. In a sense, the transitions never will be completed. There is no retreat from the age of innovation or from the acceleration of technological change, and these will demand—even if they are not allowed to dictate—social changes. No static solution is ever likely to be viable again.

We have not learned what any society must learn in an era of perpetual innovation: to be, paradoxically, familiar with change. We are unwilling to accept the alarming fact that we may never know anything permanent again except, at best, a process of change that can be made relatively smooth and continuous. We linger uneasily and ineffectually between an apparently irrelevant past and an uncertain future. The notion of automatic human progress has lost the force required to project our minds eagerly beyond tomorrow. The reluctance to think and act boldly and imaginatively into the future is implicit in the inability to see a future worth thinking about.

The paramountcy of the present produces an often exaggerated resentment of minor grievances and inconveniences in the present. If there happens, at any moment of time, to be an unusual number of these—however unrelated in their nature and cause—then people will vote in protest against the government of the day. Yet they seem to care very little about the content of the policies offered by Government and Opposition. Nor is this just because they regard them as irrelevant to major problems, for there seems to be little conscious recognition that there *are* major problems. No one seems to feel that the accumulation of disorders is in any palpable way symptomatic of a serious disequilibrium that can be perceived and made a subject of political discussion and action.

THE APPARENT STALEMATE of the major political parties makes diagnosis difficult, as well as action. In the last twenty years society has had the apparatus of the Welfare State, in very nearly the pattern of Lord Beveridge's original conception, imposed on it by the Labour Party. Superimposed on this, during thirteen years of Conservative rule, was Affluence (or the "Opportunity State," or what you will). Each party has seemed committed to the defence of one of these two phenomena in all its manifestations, with some desire to carry it further. This represents an uneasy compromise in social institutions and attitudes.

It is possible to argue that the compromise is genuine and meaningful. It is true that the Labour Party has apparently conceded that social control must not go so far as to blunt the economic effectiveness of the market system too seriously, while the majority of the Conservative Party accept that the progress of the individual in the "Opportunity State" must be limited by some degree of control in the interests of others. Yet the compromise does not in fact reflect a conviction on either side that an acceptable equipoise of social justice has been achieved. Again, it can be argued that a basis of social security, protecting the individual against the worst effects of poverty and misfortunes, together with opportunities for him to achieve prosperity and comfort by his own efforts, is the right prescription for a civilised society. But this argument, which is broadly the Tory theme, is countered by the fact of the prevailing malaise. Certainly a combination of basic security and quite rapidly rising standards of living *ought* to have inspired a general mood of vitality and optimism; but, equally certainly, it hasn't. Whether or not there is a viable compromise between the Welfare State and the Opportunity State, the one we have arrived at clearly does not represent to most people a meaningful or satisfying society.

To what extent is this impasse the fault of the politicians? There is of course an element of leadership in the job of any serious statesman, but the main business of the politician is normally concerned with how to do things that people want done. This clearly involves finding out *what* they want done; but if they do not know, is it the politician's business to tell them? He will be inclined to tell them simply what he thinks they *ought* to want.

The present situation seems to involve a serious failure in communication. No one doubts that we have the knowledge and the technological apparatus available to do a great many remarkable things. Perhaps the most revealing thing about our state of mind is our frequent use of the term "know-how." For perhaps the first time in history it seems to be easier to know how to do things than to know what to do. Or, granted that the experts know what *they* want to do, to know whether we want them to do it.

All this at a time when there is an unprecedented apparatus ostensibly dedicated to establishing and improving methods of communication. Public opinion sampling, market

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research and other techniques continually purport to tell politicians and others what people think and want. But the messages never seem to add up to any very clear and coherent picture of what is wrong with society and what kind of society people want. Then there are the social scientists, so busy analysing society that one might have expected them to come up with the answer; but they have become so wrapped up in increasingly incomprehensible jargon, that they have almost ceased to communicate in terms useful to the politician. In any case, by purporting to study the material of politics by scientific methods, they have disqualified themselves from pronouncing usefully on what *ought* to happen. Science is not, or should not be, concerned with value judgments involving ethics.

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHERS, too, have turned themselves into scientists, abandoning almost all concern with politics in order to pursue with academic zeal the chimera of Power in all its haunts and manifestations. Even such thinkers as Reinhold Niebuhr and Ortega y Gasset, who have been concerned with the ethical content of politics, have shown a deep pessimism about the ability of political theory to contribute anything meaningful to political practice or even to the discussion of ends and aims. Intellectuals resent the tendency of modern politicians to sneer at "long-haired theorists"; they might do well to ponder the possibility that political theorists have actually ceased to say anything useful to the politicians. For this is really something comparatively new. Locke, Montesquieu, Burke, Bentham, and J. S. Mill (to name only a few) did, whether one agrees with their theories or not, concern themselves intimately with the actual needs of the societies in which they lived. As a result, they had a profound influence on practising politicians—often over several generations.

So the uncertainty about ends persists, together with the gap in communication. But there are at last signs that the uneasy political compromise is beginning to break up. The Labour Party seems to be abandoning most of traditional socialism, and with it the hope of agreement on new social ends. It appears to be falling back on a sterile conservatism of that very state of society which arouses so little enthusiasm among the people (with perhaps a little extra emphasis on Welfare of the Beveridge vintage and rather less on individual Opportunity).

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, on the other hand, is proclaiming its championship of "radical change." Certainly some of the institutional and policy changes hinted at in *Putting Britain Right Ahead* are fairly drastic; whether they are radical or not is another matter. As for new ends, Mr. Heath appears to deny their political relevance in the opening paragraph of his foreword. "As I go round the country," he writes, "I find that people are asking for an entirely fresh approach to the country's problems. They are looking for constructive policies—*how* we do things rather than what needs to be done."

If that means what it appears to say, it seems to be incompatible with the existence of the apathetic malaise which is a matter of common experience. Of course in a sense people "know" what "needs to be done": they want a halt to the rise in the cost of living, and so on. But only a pretty limited number of people (mostly executives and professional experts) are passionately interested in "*how* things are done." On the other hand Mr. Heath may mean simply that people have given up hoping for any sense of long-term purpose or for enlightenment about social ends, which would be a plain admission of despair.

However, the policy document states that Conservative aims are efficiency, modernisation, prosperity, and opportunities for individuals to "lead a more worthwhile life in better surroundings." Of these the first two are clearly means rather than ends in themselves; the fourth begs more questions than it answers; and prosperity, so far, does not seem to have been accepted as an adequate purpose for human existence. Despite the enormous pressure of advertising propaganda designed to convince them that money, possessions, and conspicuous expenditure are the main end and purpose of living, most people retain a healthy cynicism about it all, even if they are not too sure what it is that is lacking.

Necessary as drastic changes of "method" may be, then, they may not possess a universal appeal if they are the sum total of a policy. Indeed, if the policy does not appear to meet the dimly felt need for a new purpose, a call for "radical change" may actually sound more alarming—and therefore less attractive—than the new-found determination of the Labour Party to leave things almost exactly as they are. Labour's resulting advantage could be greatly increased if Mr. Wilson succeeds in his obvious intention to establish himself as the kind of Father Christmas Figure made familiar by Harold Macmillan.

Is there anything that can be done to give Conservative policies at least a new rationale, and to establish them on a surer basis of principle? I believe there is, and that what is needed can be deduced from an analysis of society's malaise.

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THE central feature of this malaise is the inability of ordinary people to identify themselves in any meaningful way with the processes of government or the main institutions of society. The feeling that everything has become too large and complicated is a reflection of the realisation that control and decision-making have become too remote to be influenced, or even comprehended. This is largely responsible for the *We/They* syndrome, which is seldom found between groups operating at close quarters.

Most people recognise that they are closely affected by *how* They do things, but they have given up trying to understand *why* so many extraordinary things are done. The citizen is so often reduced to saying, "I can't imagine what They think they're doing," that it has become almost literally true. And if it is impossible to comprehend, or to find out, it soon begins to appear futile even to speculate about what ought to be done. When one is unable to influence the course of events—and the experts always seem to have a conclusive (if unconvincing) answer to any question or suggestion—one becomes hopeless, or cynical, or just uninterested. This enforced lack of participation makes much of society meaningless.

In political terms, it begins to seem as if it matters very little which side wins. A change merely means that a different lot of *Them* takes charge. The How may change, but the What and the Why remain equally obscure.

By far the most frequently heard complaint, expressed in many different ways about many different things, is that individuals—and even whole communities—are increasingly unable to influence trends and events which affect their lives profoundly. In particular, they are losing control over the development of their own physical environment. Centralisation of administration in larger and larger units, in industry and commerce as well as in government, is removing the process of decision-taking farther and farther away from the people ultimately affected. Even the business of protest and appeal has been becoming more difficult and complicated, and the "consultation" and subsequent brush-offs more perfunctory. There is a growing frustration, which is at the root of the feeling of "what's the use?" Hence the more or less aimless protest votes at by-elections.

Of course the loss of control and the tendency towards increasing scale are to some extent inseparable from the increasing complexity of technological processes: but surely to nothing like the extent that we are seeing today? The truth is that every innovation is seen by someone as a chance (or an excuse) to intensify the process of centralisation that he himself desires. Little anxious thought is given to the problem of offsetting increases in size by devolution of authority. There is always a perfectly logical argument for extending the area of centralised control in the interests of efficiency, planning, and standardisation. But the gain in efficiency is too often and too easily assumed as axiomatic; the disadvantages (and even inefficiencies) of uniformity are seldom considered; and secondary effects are often not foreseen at all.

THIS WAS SOMETHING ELSE that de Tocqueville saw approaching. He noted that centralisation was an instinct of democracy—and a preparation for despotism. In a fascinating conversation with him, J. S. Mill analysed the English instinct against it.

> Up to now centralisation has been the thing most foreign to the English temperament. Our habits or the nature of our temperament do not in the least draw us towards general ideas; but centralisation is based on general ideas; that is the desire for power to attend, in a uniform and general way, to the present and future needs of society. We have never considered government from such a lofty point of view. So we have divided administrative functions up infinitely and have made them independent of one another.... The tendency of English politics up to now has been to remain as free as possible to do what was convenient. *The taste for making others submit to a way of life which one thinks more useful for them than they do themselves, is not a common taste in England.*

The italics are mine. The fact that this is happening now does not mean that it has become a common taste—only that it has become the taste of a minority, whose appetite grows with what it feeds on. The majority are, I believe, becoming increasingly fed up with it.

Mill went on to say that he and his friends were at that time (1835) "attacking the present parochial and provincial institutions because they serve as tools of the aristocracy. Taking power from our adversaries we naturally hope to vest it in the government, because nothing is prepared within the present institutions for inheriting some of this power." We can now see that when the destruction of the power of the aristocracy has been completed, new excuses have been found for continuing the process.

IT IS POSSIBLE to cross-check the argument from another angle. I doubt whether anyone who has lived in a country village and is really familiar with such a community could dispute the fact that the prevailing malaise and dissatisfaction are much less marked there than in urban or suburban communities. As for opportunities to "lead a more worthwhile life in better surroundings," most village people know that their life

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is worthwhile and are greatly concerned to ensure that urban planners and developers do not make their surroundings worse. For all these fears and occasional resentments, the small village community is pretty well satisfied (once it has got its main water and sewerage) with the quality of its life. The drift from village to town has been not merely halted but decisively reversed, and the young man getting married is indignant if the R.D.C. can only offer him a house outside his own village.

The urban mentality finds all this very tiresome, and believes that in the interests of efficiency villages will have to be brought back into the mainstream of "progress." The townsmen will have a fight on their hands. Particularly offensive is the insolent new fashion among urban planners of saying that the countryside in which countrymen live and work is destined to become an "amenity area" for motorised townspeople. It is in fact the villagers who are putting up the only perceptible fight to reverse the trend towards centralisation and to secure some measure of control over their own environment before it is too late. One symptom of this is the campaign to compel higher authorities to make parish councils privy to the details of planning applications.

Now it can be said that this is no more than a hangover of what Mill recognised as the innate English taste in government, and that it is doomed to wither away with the march of progress. It seems to me that this is to look at the matter the wrong way round. If the small community, living a life that still manages to be in some degree dissociated from modern trends, is found to be both more satisfied and more determined to preserve its independence, this suggests not only that recent trends are not inevitable but that some reversal of them would find a wider welcome throughout the country.

This would no doubt be bitterly opposed by the experts, who will find cogent arguments why in every particular instance decentralisation would be either undesirable or impossible. But experts sometimes seem very arrogant, as well as remote, to ordinary people, detached from the ordinary business of living, impatiently insisting that ordinary people must expect to suffer the unpleasant secondary effects inseparable from the things the experts want to do.

IS THERE really much doubt that a genuine attempt to control the centralising process, to restore wherever possible the taking of decisions to a level less remote from the individual citizen, to improve the machinery of consultation and to give the individual at least a feeling that he was in touch with the centres of power and able to comprehend what was going on, would meet with a real response from the people? In making such an attempt the Tory Party would be returning to some of the principles it seems to have forgotten, and would be appealing to a deep instinct of its countrymen.

There is much in the new Conservative policies that is perfectly consistent with this. It is consistent with the intention to break up the rigid structure of the social services and to give wider opportunities for individual choice. It is consistent with the declared determination to put the interests of the customer first. It is consistent with the intention to encourage small business and farms. It fits in well with the desire to speed the reorganisation of trade unions and to encourage plant bargaining. It is consistent with the intention to simplify the system of personal taxation, to increase incentives and to make it easier for the individual to accumulate a modest capital out of earnings.

It is broadly consistent with an economic policy which has become increasingly influenced by the Marshallian doctrines of Mr. Enoch Powell. Anti-monopoly legislation and the enforcement of competition do tend to decentralise decision-taking and to make the choices of individuals, as consumers, more effective. But it is very necessary to recognise that most people do not consider the money calculus of the market to be always all-important or overriding. This is not, contrary to a widespread belief, inconsistent with the free market philosophy, since Mr. Powell himself has always acknowledged the propriety of the community interfering with the free play of the market for purely social ends.

The Conservative policy statement does show some distressing signs of having too easily accepted the inevitability of the trend towards centralisation. "The community tasks which are best tackled over a larger area are growing in number all the time," it alleges. Is this really true? Or is it the sort of thing that people say without having properly thought it out? It would have been helpful to have been given some examples. What are these apparently numerous "community tasks" which are reaching a critical point of growth? Does the experience of other community tasks which *have* been tackled over a larger area, from public utilities to the social services, really suggest that in every case the gains outweigh the losses? Are there no cases of community tasks which might be better tackled over *smaller* areas? On the whole, this seems to me a thoughtless generalisation. In any case, what is "best"? Greater co-ordination may in some cases produce greater efficiency, but the centralisation of all administration and control can often demonstrably reduce it. Finally, how dearly is an increased measure

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of administrative efficiency bought if the result is increased remoteness from the citizen, leading to frustration and lack of personal identification with any responsibility for the "community tasks"?

THE WEAKNESS OF THE CASE is most clearly shown in the discussion of the need for regional policies and machinery. "If larger authorities are needed in order to handle these tasks," we are told, "we must also see that they are subject to proper democratic control." It is a matter of common observation that democratic control, and perhaps more important interest in the democratic process, becomes progressively less as the size of authorities increases. The statement is by implication accepting a weakening of democratic control. Moreover, the whole argument is upside down. What do we want regional government for? Surely the most fruitful line to pursue is to see how we can actually de-centralise some of the machinery of *national* government to *smaller* authorities, not how we can absorb and centralise the powers of *local* government? Regional authorities can be thought of as either "larger" or "smaller," according to whether you want to centralise from the bottom or de-centralise from the top.

If the Conservative Party is going, in its enthusiasm for efficiency and modernisation, to accept uncritically the technocrat's arguments in favour of size and centralisation, then it is unlikely either to attract support or to revitalise politics. I am convinced that it ought to be continually seeking opportunities to de-centralise as much control and decision-taking as possible, in order to dispel the increasing feeling of remoteness and futility among ordinary people.

The argument on grounds of efficiency needs scrutinising afresh in every particular case, taking account of *all* the factors. Sometimes it will not even stand up on purely accountancy grounds, as I.C.I. discovered. In other cases it may be better to accept a measure of "inefficiency" in administration in order to provide a greater total satisfaction to the citizen.

The principle will have to be carried through to all those matters which closely affect the individual. For example, the policy of closing smaller village schools and transporting children to much larger ones elsewhere, of centralising hospital beds in large and remote institutions, needs a really close examination to see whether it actually does best meet the needs of the communities concerned. It certainly conflicts violently with their wishes and reduces their satisfaction. Is the possible saving in cost and staff really worth while in the broader context?

FINALLY, I believe that far too little thought and study have been given to the widely held belief that the processes of technological innovation, because they involve heavy capital expenditure, must always and of their nature tend to increase the size of institutions and the need for centralised control. In some cases they may greatly increase the dangers of centralised control, and I should have thought that in others they might even make devolution easier and more practicable. It is far too easy to assume that because two trends have coincided in time they must necessarily be inseparable. It is time to declare that devolution and variety are good in themselves: it is the opposite policy that has to be justified.

It is not easy for the administrator, rightly concerned with the need to make his own machine as efficient as possible, and occasionally impatient of ignorant attempts to question and thwart him, to stand back and see what effect the sum total of his own and other centralising trends is having on society. Nor is it easy to recognise that the ignorant attempts to question and restrain him may be symptomatic of a widespread dissatisfaction and malaise.

This is essentially a matter for politics and politicians. It is a theme which the Labour Party is unlikely, because of its penchant towards planning and control, to embrace with any enthusiasm. But it is one which Tories should find congenial and fruitful, with roots in their traditional principles and with a genuine social purpose inherent in it. And if at last the people of this country could feel that someone was interested in trying to restore to them a closer relationship with, and participation in, the processes of government and the institutions of society, I believe that in the end they would respond with some enthusiasm. If the process were successful, it might ultimately restore the sense of purpose and identification that has been so conspicuously lacking, with results that might be felt throughout the economy and throughout society. With these stakes, it must be worth trying. That it is worth attention is obvious—for even a serious study of its feasibility would bring to light possibilities of improvement.

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Taylor's Own Times

By Asa Briggs

A FULL JUDGMENT on this scintillating survey of 20th-century English history[1] will take time to mature. Certainly it makes an immediately powerful impact. Like R. C. K. Ensor, the author of the previous volume of the Oxford History of England, Mr. Taylor looks at the events and the people of his own time in an unashamedly committed, often exuberant, sometimes idiosyncratic way. If nearness does not always lend enchantment to the view, it certainly encourages Mr. Taylor to rely on his own distinctive angle of vision. His approach is through narrative history, not through analysis, and it is his individual assessments and generalisations—many of them in the form of quips—which illuminate the narrative, rather than quotations from the personalities or the documents, still only partially accessible, of the period. There are fewer direct quotations from contemporary sources than in most history books of this size on this or any other century. Even the footnotes, bibliography, and index have an engagingly whimsical side to them, although the shock element in the first bibliographical footnotes on George V (p. 2), Asquith (p. 3), and Lloyd George (p. 5), is not sustained in later footnotes, even when characters like Morrison and Greenwood (p. 279), or Kingsley Wood, Hore-Belisha, and Wavell (pp. 459–60) offer equally tempting opportunities. The bibliography is as much an anthology of opinions as a list of references, many of them trenchant and unequivocal:

> It is often said that civil servants should be protected from publicity during their life-time. Why? The official military histories name generals, who are equally public servants, and distribute blame or even occasionally praise. Civil servants deserve the same treatment. The rule is in fact an unworthy survival from the time when government was a "misterie," reserved for the Crown and its servants. Such rigmarole has no place in a community which claims to be democratic.

Prime ministers escape no more easily from the bibliography than civil servants. "C. R. Attlee, prime minister at the very end of the period, wrote *As It Happened* (1954), certainly a funny thing, and Francis Williams recorded for him *A Prime Minister Remembers* (1961), which shows how much a prime minister can forget." Perhaps the most memorable index reference refers to Keynes—"misses the multiplier, 288" —although there are many others that will stick, like "BBC, model for regulated capitalism, 278n," "Liberal Party, seems to have been proved right, 440," or "Eden, given access to archives, 604."

It is central to Mr. Taylor's purpose to strip history of its "misteries." This, indeed, is at the core of his "radicalism," and it drives him not only to deflate the pompous but to explode the myths of our own time. Very frequently, of course, he has to go back over his own tracks (in describing once again, for example, the origins of the Second World War as he, if few other of his immediate contemporaries, saw them), but he has lots of new characters to juggle with—Archbishop Lang, for example, or T. E. Lawrence and Charlie Chaplin—and lots of new themes, including sex and religion, on both of which he gets very near to general theories. For the most part, however, theories appeal less to him as a historian than human follies and achievements. He conceives of the historian's task as the unbaring of the true history of events in the order in which they happened and as the fullest possible exposure of those transactions between individuals which influenced the course of public policy. While he recognises that "the greatest decisions are nearly always the ones most difficult to explain simply," he does not probe deeply into individual motives. This means that he often fails to convince. He is brilliant on Lloyd George, but impatient with Asquith, balanced on Baldwin but, in my view, too kind to MacDonald. The difficulty with this highly personalised history is that it often provokes not a debate but a retort. Mr. Taylor is always the complete non-

[1] *English History, 1914–1945*. By A. J. P. TAYLOR. Oxford, 45s.

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organisation man, not only "more interested in people than in institutions," but not very well disposed towards institutions. Some institutions either get left out of his history altogether, or are dismissed briefly—there is very little, for example, about business organisations or trade unions—and the builders of new institutions receive short shrift for their labours, usually being condemned, like Trenchard or Reith, for fundamental fallacies in thinking or feeling. Problems of "class," "profession," or "organisation" are touched on only briefly or not at all, although at least from Graham Wallas onwards these problems along with more general problems of scale have rightly been felt to be central to 20th-century society. In relation to all these themes Mr. Taylor's view of history limits him, as it has limited his prodigious reading. The historian for him is a quite different kind of being from an economist or a social scientist, not one kind of social scientist. This leads him into what often look like quite inadequate simplifications—about cultural change, for example, or the influence of technology. The graphs of economic indices with which the book is prefaced are left to stand on their own without explanations or connecting links, so that we are unsure whether Mr. Taylor has included them to strengthen his interpretation or to add to our stock of reference. There are times, too, when the word "people" desperately needs to be broken down, and when a little comparison between British politics and society and other people's politics and society would illuminate much that otherwise seems obscure, and perhaps qualify judgments which, as it is, we must take or leave. Yet there is an engaging candour in Mr. Taylor's cross-references to economics and science, and a refreshing vitality in his belief that you can strip history of its "misterie" all on your own by pointing fiercely towards "the Establishment" or by recalling Cobbett's revelation of THE THING, "the entrenched English system" which always looks after *its* own.

THERE ARE TIMES in the book when Mr. Taylor admits that the kind of history he writes and writes so well will be very difficult to write in relation to future periods. In his preface he explicitly says that he is leaving science on one side for the excellent reason that "I do not understand the internal combustion engine, let alone the atomic bomb." In fact, he includes Tizard and Lindemann, Bernal and Zuckerman, though not Fleming or Florey (the doctors do not get a square deal in this book), and points out how research and development were beginning to modify both intelligence and finance. Science will have to be given a different place in the next volume of the history. As far as economics as a social science is concerned, Mr. Taylor gets a very long way indeed by commonsense—some of his passages about economic history and one footnote about economic historians are excellent—but he recognises that commonsense was beginning to be displaced during the 1930s. Keynes, like Einstein, was "incomprehensible, where Newton, like Adam Smith, had been neat and obvious [were they?]. The concert-goer could hum the themes of Mozart and Beethoven, not those of Stravinsky. He never learnt to hum the themes of the new economics." Given the interconnected role of science and economics in our even more recent history, what kind of a historian will we need to dispel the "misterie"? Mr. Taylor as an outstanding radio and television performer knows one of the necessary qualifications. "A time will come when every history faculty will possess gramophone-cubicles and film theatres, which will be as much used as libraries or lecture rooms—maybe more." By itself, however, this equipment will not be enough. Historical synthesis will depend on analysis. There will be ample room for debate, but it will be debate within a "frame"

EVEN IN RELATION to Mr. Taylor's period, more study of the frame might have been rewarding. Two of his general ideas are fascinating enough to have sustained deeper and broader examination.

England, he suggests on several occasions during the book, was the kind of society where agreement was relatively easy, where the political culture, as it is now fashionable to call it, more often made for compromise or evasion than for conflict and violence. As a result Baldwin and MacDonald were in many respects interchangeable, but English ways of thinking and behaving provided no guidance in relation either to India or Palestine. Ireland, too, which Mr. Taylor handles very well, was not provided with a final settlement. Chamberlain's deal with De Valera in 1938 was for De Valera "a payment on account." Since the end of Mr. Taylor's period, successive British governments have had to deal often equivocally, seldom completely confidently, with other people's intransigence. Imaginative gaps have widened. Was there not a sense in which the inter-war years were critical years in relation to this process? Were the changes simply power changes, as Mr. Taylor implies? This is only one question about the relation between ourselves and others.

There are occasions during Mr. Taylor's narrative, also, when he himself seems to me, without raising old issues, to show an imaginative failure to understand the nature of the German

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régime between 1933 and 1945. Anxious as he rightly is to separate history from propaganda, is it really an adequate comment on anti-Semitism (there should be an index-reference to this) to say that Jews were treated as badly in other countries as in Germany, and that there was in any case a good deal of quiet anti-Semitism in England, with Jews being kept out of many social organisations such as golf-clubs? The specially horrifying features of the Nazi policy towards the Jews are central, not peripheral: they are concerned with pathology as well as politics, or with pathology as a branch of politics. There was a basic difference in social and cultural structure in Britain and Germany during the 1930s, as there is now, and it is surely the duty of the historian of England—Mr. Taylor insists throughout that he is limiting his account to England—to deal with such frames as well as with events or people. Not to seem to understand Germany—and Mr. Taylor has written a great deal about Germany—can lead even the historian of England into difficulties. And by the end of his book, having raised the important question of Roosevelt, the United States and England, Mr. Taylor seems to be in danger of focusing attention exclusively on power questions once again. From some of his earlier and rather old-fashioned references to Roosevelt's "New Deal," is it certain that he understands the United States?

Mr. Taylor's second idea is contained in his last unforgettable sentences. If Churchill's "blood, sweat, and tears" speech of 1940 reminds Mr. Taylor of Garibaldi and Clemenceau —and it was none the worse for that—Mr. Taylor's last sentences surely have echoes of Gibbon and Macaulay:

> The British were the only people who went through both world wars from beginning to end. Yet they remained a peaceful and civilised people, tolerant, patient, and generous. Traditional values lost much of their force. Other values took their place. Imperial greatness was on the way out; the welfare state was on the way in. The British Empire declined; the condition of the people improved. Few sang "Land of Hope and Glory." Few even sang "England, Arise." England had risen all the same.

In other words, though British power declined throughout the period and the faith of most British people during the Second World War that they were directing history had an element of illusion in it, in some sense the country had "risen." At this final point of peroration, argument surely begins. In what sense had the country risen? In terms of the economic indices left stranded by Mr. Taylor at the beginning of the book? Relatively or absolutely? On its

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own or as part of a bigger complex? Did the people who sang "England, Arise" at the beginning of the period think that England would rise in this way? What was the relationship between traditional values and new values? What were the new values, anyway? Were they the values of war-time fellowship, the "sense of solidarity" referred to so frequently when danger threatened or when hopes of a more equalitarian society were raised? Or were they the values expressed through a "mass culture," particularly in the national press and based on giving people what they want? In this whole process of change what were the relative contributions of the state and the market? How and why did the British Empire decline? Was it because a British *élite* had lost power, because new colonial *élites* had risen, because the English people were ignorant or apathetic or anti-imperial, or because other nations' power had outstripped that of this country? Given that the final verdict is such an optimistic one—even a complacent one—was there no sense in which these inter-war years were the wasted years, the years of the locust, as Professor Mowat saw them in his *Britain Between the Wars* (a valuable textbook to which Mr. Taylor generously acknowledges his debt)?

AFTER FINISHING *English History, 1914–1945,* all the questions leap to the surface. They are very general questions, most of them concerned with Britain's place within the 20th-century world and with the place of the years 1914 to 1945 within the century. By contrast, some of the questions or retorts that Mr. Taylor provokes about particular events or particular people seem trivial and not worth while pursuing. Yet it is by no means clear that such general questions could be properly posed, let alone answered—certainly there would be no need for retorts—if we were not in possession of a book as superbly written, as energetically organised and as full of challenge—as Mr. Taylor's. An immense amount of work has gone into its compilation, and it is an invaluable addition to the Oxford series. As narrative history it could scarcely be surpassed, and narrative history is a rare art in our age precisely because our conceptions of history are changing. Its influence goes much deeper than this, however. It rids us of many superficial impressions and easy and familiar topical generalisations which handicap understanding, about the "missed opportunities" of the 1930s, for example, or about the extent of planning in the same period, about the extent of the "depression" and the extent of the guilt and incompetence of the guilty and incompetent men.

In other words, we do succeed, at times almost despite Mr. Taylor, in moving from news into history. We can only move further when we have access to more materials. All recent historians must agree fervently with Mr. Taylor that it is time we had free access to basic sources. When the "frame" within which we think and act in some respects has not changed, is it not absurd that we cannot examine Treasury policy in 1929 or 1931? Must we wait till everything is dead before we seek to bring it back to life?

Myths about Ideology

By David Marquand

FOR SOME YEARS now, the official myths of British party politics, propagated by the parties themselves, have been overshadowed by an Unofficial Myth, propagated implicitly by the more fashionable commentators in the quality press and the more ruthless interviewers on radio and television. According to this Unofficial Myth, the two major parties in this country are both essentially oligarchic in organisation and essentially non-ideological in policy. These two propositions, moreover, are normative as well as descriptive. Only with parties of this sort, it is alleged, can the British Constitution work: and the immaculate conception of the British Constitution is, of course, self-evident.

But, the Unofficial Myth goes on, although these two propositions are in fact accepted by the sane, sober fellows who lead the two parties in Parliament, they are not accepted to anything like the same extent by the strange people who actually man the parties at the grass roots; thus, there is a gulf between "moderate" Parliamentary leaders and "extreme" extra-Parliamentary followers. The fourth proposition is more complicated still, and is rarely put forward explicitly. It says that even if the first three are in fact false, they ought to be true; that poli-

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ticians who behave as though they were true ought to be commended, while politicians who do not ought to be denigrated; that events which might be thought to demonstrate their falsity do not really happen, even if it looks at first sight as though they have.

The implications of this Unofficial Myth are, of course, profoundly conservative. It rests at bottom on an élitist conception of politics and Political Man. More directly, it rests on the assumptions that the present distribution of wealth and power is broadly satisfactory; and that such economic and social problems as remain can be solved "pragmatically," without structural changes and without sharp conflicts of interest or belief. But this is not surprising. The Unofficial Myth was fashioned at a time when these assumptions were more plausible than ever before in this century. Robert McKenzie's classic study, *British Political Parties*—the Bible of which the Unofficial Myth is a crude vulgarisation—first appeared in 1955; and in 1955 it made sense to see British politics as a struggle between teams of Parliamentary "ins" and "outs," concerned only with minor adjustments to a system whose outlines were universally accepted. In 1955 the Titmuss Revolution had not happened; the words "welfare state" were still a handy catch-phrase implying that the problems of poverty and injustice which had preoccupied British politicians for half a century no longer existed. More important still, it looked as though the economy could after all be managed satisfactorily by monetary techniques alone. No one but the more atavistic sections of the Labour Party wished to return to the siege economy of the '40s; and there was no pressing and inescapable need to devise more sophisticated forms of economic planning. The recurrent crises of the late '50s and '60s still lay in the future; the structural weaknesses they laid bare were still hidden mercifully from view.

But in the next ten years these assumptions were progressively eroded. By 1965—the year of the incomes policy, the National Plan, and the Conservative Party's first faltering steps along the trail blazed by Enoch Powell—they had become quite untenable. It is a fortunate coincidence, then, that 1965 should also see the publication of Professor Beer's masterly analysis of the relationship between belief and action in British politics in the age of the managed economy, and of the Keele University study of local politics in Newcastle-under-Lyme.[1] For

[1] *Modern British Politics*. By Samuel H. Beer. Faber, 32s. 6d. *Constituency Politics: A Study of the Electoral Behaviour of Newcastle-under-Lyme*. By Frank Bealey, J. Blondel, and W. P. McCann. Faber, 63s.

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although these books are written from different points of view, and with different questions in mind, the two together present a formidable challenge to the Unofficial Myth at almost every point.

THE KEELE STUDY does this in two ways. In the first place, its exhaustive analysis of a survey of the opinions of party activists in the constituency strongly suggests that the simple conception of an "extreme" rank-and-file, contrasted with a "moderate" Parliamentary leadership, just does not hold water. Conservative activists were, if anything, slightly more moderate than their Parliamentary leaders, and a great deal more moderate than Conservative voters in the country as a whole. Labour activists, it is true, were a little to the Left of the Parliamentary party—but only a little. About 40 per cent of them agreed with the unilateralist decision taken in 1960 at Scarborough, while another 40 per cent disagreed. Most of the rest, in a fascinating flourish of statesmanship, agreed "to some extent." Just over half thought it was possible to identify one single country as an obstacle to world peace; of these, 60 per cent thought that the country concerned was the United States, while only a third thought it was the Soviet Union. Only 46 per cent of the sample had ever heard of Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution. Of these, 57 per cent thought it should be retained. Thus, the Labour activists as a group took a Left-wing position on the issues mentioned in the survey. But, in one of the most interesting findings in the whole chapter, it emerged that only a tiny minority—5 per cent of the sample—took a Left-wing position on all of them. The Left-wing majority, in other words, was not a solid bloc of "extremists," but a shifting coalition whose members contrived to be both "moderate" and "extreme" at the same time. The neat stereotypes of the commentators were, after all, stereotypes, not flesh and blood.

The second point which emerges from the Keele study is more complicated, but at least as significant. One of the most persuasive implications of the Unofficial Myth, on which pragmatic liberals and disillusioned Marxists can join hands, is the belief that since the two major parties are so alike, it makes no real difference which is in power. At the national level, it is of course impossible to tell just how much difference a long period of Labour rule would in fact make; and if the argument is confined to the national level, assertion and faith have to take the place of facts. But at the local level, this is not so: in many local authorities, Labour has held uninterrupted power for years, and in some for decades. It is true, of course, that the scope of local government is restricted. There are no Napoleons of Notting Hill Gate in real life—and no Lenins of Lambeth either. But although local authorities cannot themselves carry through major redistributions of wealth and economic power, they can make a substantial difference to the local distribution of political power. And this, the Keele study makes clear, is precisely what has happened in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Before the war, the Borough Council was controlled by Independents. This meant, as the Keele study puts it, that it was "dominated by shopkeepers and small businessmen whose economic leadership was given corporate embodiment in the Chamber of Trade, and whose social pre-eminence was expressed in membership of the Rotary Club." After the war, the links between social status, economic leadership, and political power were broken. The Labour Party won a majority on the Council; crucial political decisions henceforth emanated from the Labour Group; within the Labour Group, although the dominant individuals are now mostly middle class, working-class people were and are in a majority. Where political leadership used to reflect and reinforce social and economic leadership, it has now become, to some extent at least, a countervailing influence. And this in turn may have had great repercussions on the pattern of social and economic leadership itself. As the Keele study rather guardedly puts it:

> Thus the lowest levels in the social and economic hierarchy gained political control in the late 1940s, a reversal of the natural order of things and a blow from which the social and economic leadership has never recovered. It seems likely, therefore, that the loss of political leadership by those who formerly wielded it, and their failure to regain it, resulting in sixteen years of Labour rule, may have involved a decline in their prestige that already has upset the status system of Newcastle.

BUT IF IT MATTERS who takes political decisions, it matters even more what kind of decisions they take. It is here that Professor Beer joins the debate. *Modern British Politics* is by any standards one of the most profound and illuminating studies of the British political system which we have had for some time. It is also the most powerful single counterblast so far to what I have called the Unofficial Myth. For the heart of the Unofficial Myth is, of course, the proposition that there is, and ought to be, no fundamental difference of ideology between the two main parties: that the decisions they take when in power are, and ought to be, taken on

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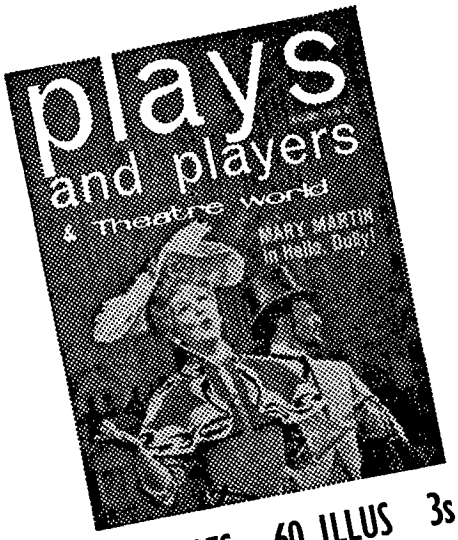

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pragmatic and not on ideological grounds. And what Professor Beer has done is to show that in fact ideology plays a crucial part, both in the way the parties govern themselves and in the way they govern the country.

Conservative ideology is extraordinarily elusive; and its operational significance is correspondingly hard to assess. But that does not mean that it is non-existent or irrelevant. On the contrary, Professor Beer identifies two persistent ideological themes in the history of British Conservatism, and shows that they have both had immense influence on the way the Conservative Party behaves. The first is the traditional Tory stress on the necessity of strong and authoritative leadership; the second, the theme of Tory paternalism evoked at different times by Disraeli, Lord Randolph Churchill, Baldwin, and Neville Chamberlain. The first helps to explain the astonishing cohesion and self-discipline of the Conservative Party down the years; the second, the equally astonishing way in which it has come to terms with the Welfare State and pioneered new forms of Government intervention in the economy. For as Professor Beer reminds us, what he calls the "managed economy" was born, not in 1945 or even in 1940, but in 1931. Its midwife was a predominantly Conservative Government, whose Labour predecessor had shown nothing like the same intellectual or political boldness. And one reason for this was that traditional Conservative ideology eased the transition from *laissez-faire,* in a way in which traditional Labour ideology did not.

THE ROLE of ideology in the Labour Party is, of course, far more overt. Here Professor Beer makes two important points. The first is that Labour's celebrated belief in "party democracy" is neither a monstrous rejection of the norms of the British Constitution, as adherents of the Unofficial Myth so often depict it, nor a quaint survival, irrelevant to the way the party really works. On the contrary, Professor Beer argues, Labour's belief in party democracy derives logically from the Socialist conception of democratic politics, in which legitimate power is seen as flowing upwards from people to Government, via party. It undoubtedly is a rejection of the Tory conception of democracy. But there is no obvious reason why the British Constitution must be interpreted in a Tory way. As for its role in the power structure of the Labour Party, it is clear that this is in fact extremely important. In quiet times, it is true, when the party is otherwise united, the slogans of party democracy are not heard; and it is easy to assume that the sleeping dog has died. But as soon as the party is divided on other issues, this central element in Labour's ideology assumes a critical significance. For it means that, in addition to answering the substantive questions before it, the party has to decide who in principle has the right to answer them; and as anyone who has ever served on a committee can testify, jurisdictional questions of that sort are guaranteed to raise blood pressures higher and faster than any conceivable question of substance could. The classic occasion was, of course, the long controversy over Clause IV and Unilateralism. And whatever else that showed, it is clear both that the party leadership had to make great concessions to stay in power, and that one reason for this was the widespread belief among the rank-and-file that the party was, and should remain, a "democratic" institution.

The significance of the Clause IV episode does not end there. At the time, the struggle between "revisionists" and "fundamentalists" in the Labour Party was often described as a struggle between rational, realistic pragmatists on one side, and wild, woolly ideologists on the other. In fact, Professor Beer points out, the revisionists were ideologists too. They were not only trying to persuade the Labour Party to adapt itself to a changing social and economic environment. They were also trying to convert it from one ideology to another. Revisionist doctrines contained a remarkably coherent system of values and beliefs, fundamentally at variance with the values and beliefs enshrined in and symbolised by the 1918 Constitution. They did not only challenge Labour's traditional assumption that the economy could not be controlled without extensive public ownership; they also challenged its belief in the iniquity of the profit motive and the acquisitive instinct. More serious still, they even challenged the proletarian myth which had provided the party's original justification and *raison d'être.* Revisionist tactics, moreover—a fact which Professor Beer does not stress as much as he might—were exactly what one would expect of the adherents of a militant ideology in its early, crusading stages. The revisionists rejected compromise and the arts of coalition politics; they had nothing but contempt for those who wished to unite the party behind adroit verbal formulae; as fervently as their fundamentalist enemies, they believed that the party must be doctrinally pure—and they were prepared to risk political suicide in order to enforce its purity.

BY A CURIOUS PARADOX, however, the ideological feuds which divided the Labour Party in the '50s illustrate not only the influence of political beliefs on political action, but also the influence of action on belief. For although the revisionists

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of the '50s could trace their intellectual ancestry back to the early Fabians and beyond, revisionism as a political movement derived its impetus almost entirely from the experiences of the 1945 Labour Government. According to Professor Beer, the 1945 Labour Government tried at first to govern in the spirit of the traditional ideology implied by the 1918 Constitution. Gradually, it abandoned the attempt, not because it wished to do so, but because the ideology of the 1918 Constitution turned out to be unworkable. The basic problem facing the 1945 Government was the economic dislocation left by the war. At first, the Government tried to solve it by the methods of physical planning and manpower budgeting which it had inherited from the wartime coalition. But these methods would not work without direction of labour; and direction of labour was ruled out by the trade unions. Thus, the Government was forced to retreat from physical planning, not by its enemies but by its friends. By the end of its period in office it had almost given up the attempt to plan the economy at all; and its main tool of economic management was the Keynesian technique of national income analysis. But whereas physical planning was quite compatible with the ideology of the 1918 Constitution, and was indeed legitimated by it in the eyes of the party faithful, Keynesian techniques were a different matter. Keynesian capitalism was still capitalism; its engine was still the profit motive; it still rested on what Socialists had always condemned as exploitation. Hence, the crisis of the '50s. Revisionism was an attempt to work out the theoretical rationale of the retreat which had been forced on the 1945 Government, and to provide it with a moral justification. Fundamentalism was the response of those who pretended that the retreat had not taken place, or who preferred to explain it in the comforting terms of incompetence, cowardice, or treachery.

THIS, as I understand it, is the essence of Professor Beer's argument; and it seems to me entirely convincing. As so often happens in the social sciences, however, the patient has got up and walked away from beneath the surgeon's knife. Professor Beer's book is essentially an analysis of the politics of stalemate. The British political system as he describes it is the system which was ushered in by the post-war Labour Government, and which reached its heyday during the '50s. In that system, the Government's role was curiously passive. By the use of Keynesian techniques, it kept the

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economy on a more or less even keel. Apart from that, it held the ring for what Professor Beer calls the "producer groups"—the great vested interests of organised Capital and Labour, whose co-operation was indispensable to the success of any major Government policy, who negotiated with it almost as independent plenipotentiaries, and whose combined pressures largely determined the shape its policies took. Minimal changes were made in the distribution of the national income; occasional bribes were held out to this or that "consumer group" within the electorate. But although the Government could not help having immense influence over the economy, it shrank from using it purposively, in pursuit of clearly-defined goals. As the sociologist, Ralph Samuel, once pointed out, the system was in fact uncannily reminiscent of the Bastard Feudalism of the fifteenth century, in which the Crown had become the football of its over-mighty subjects.

Bastard Feudalism, however, gave way to the far more energetic monarchy of the Tudors; and the question which will have to be answered in the next few years is whether Bastard Capitalism will do the same. As early as 1961 it was clear that the stalemate described by Professor Beer had reached a crisis, caused by its failure to generate an adequate rate of economic growth. Selwyn Lloyd's pay pause represented an attempt by Government to coerce one of the "producer groups"; the NEDC, which he set up the following year, was an attempt to cajole them more purposively than they had been cajoled before. The first failed miserably; but the partial success of the second enabled the present Government to go much further than Selwyn Lloyd ever tried to go. Whatever the economic rights and wrongs of the National Plan may be, it implies a major change in the political system. By a mixture of blandishments and bullying, the Government is now actively prodding the producer groups along a path of its own choosing. Its incomes policy implies an even greater extension of the role of the State. In principle, at least, it is now responsible, not only for deciding what proportion of a man's income at a given level should be paid in taxes, but for helping to decide how much income a given section of the community should receive in the first place. Once again, the political implications are immensely far-reaching. The only possible criterion for a publicly-determined incomes policy in a democracy is the criterion of "fairness." Thus, the mere fact that the law of the market is no longer sacrosanct in this field creates a far more effective lever for the redistribution of wealth than any that has existed before.

THEORY ALMOST ALWAYS lags behind practice. No one has yet worked out the logic of the Government's policy, and it is highly unlikely that the Government itself has thought through the implications of what it is doing. By the same token, the Conservatives have not yet worked out a coherent strategy. Nevertheless, one thing seems clear. It is now almost certainly too late for the Government to draw back from its present course, even if it wished to do so. Commitments have been made; expectations have been created; habits are being fostered. But this, in itself, confronts the Conservative Party with a painful dilemma. Many of their own supporters in industry have been drawn into the bargaining process which paved the way for the Plan, and are now committed to the results. If the Conservatives oppose it intransigently, they may offend their friends in the Boardrooms. But if they do not oppose it intransigently, it is hard to see how they can oppose it at all. They can hardly advocate a return to the stalemate of the '50s, since that was an acknowledged failure. Instead, they will have to put forward an alternative diagnosis of Britain's economic sickness, and suggest an alternative cure. But the only

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alternative available is Enoch Powell's—which would necessitate a head-on clash with organised labour. If the Conservatives choose that alternative, and there are signs that they have in fact begun to do so, the role of ideology in British politics is, therefore, likely to be even more obtrusive in future than that ascribed to it by Professor Beer.

How Authentic is the "Vinland Map"?

The Vinland Map and The Tartar Relation. By R. A. Skelton, Thomas E. Marston, and George D. Painter. *Yale University Press*, New Haven and London, $15.00, 5 guineas.

With all the controversy which the "Vinland Map" has provoked in widely different circles, it is important to be clear at the outset that what is primarily under discussion is the *authenticity of the Map*—and *not* whether the Norsemen reached America in the 11th century, thus anticipating Christopher Columbus.

The object under discussion, therefore, is a sheet of parchment, folded in two, on the inner side of which a world map is drawn in reddish-black ink. The over-all dimensions of the opening are 11¼ × 16½ inches approximately. On the outer leaf is an abbreviated inscription in Latin—"The delineation of the first, second, and third parts of the *Speculum*." The Map was found inserted in a manuscript book, and it has at present no history prior to the year 1957, when it was acquired by the Yale University Library. The editors are silent on its former home, but it is believed to have come from a Spanish library. How such a document could have escaped notice for so long is difficult to understand. R. A. Skelton argues that a number of important maps have come to light after many years in obscurity—a comment which would have been more acceptable in the year 1900 than in 1965, when the interest in the history of cartography is much greater, and prices consequently higher.

The Map reached Yale bound with a hitherto unknown manuscript version of Plauo Car-

G. R. Crone *is the Librarian and Map Curator of the Royal Geographical Society in London, and the author of* Modern Geographers (*1951*), Maps and Their Makers (*1953*), The Explorers: An Anthology of Discovery (*1962*), *and* Background to Geography (*1965*).

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pini's journey to the Mongol court (*The Tartar Relation*) written down by a certain Friar, C. de Bridia, whose name is not otherwise recorded. A year later Yale acquired a manuscript version of part of the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais, in its original damaged binding. Arguments are advanced for concluding that all three pieces were at one time bound together in this binding. They are all stated to be in the same hand, "Upper Rhineland bastard (or cursive) book hand," for which the date 1440 *circa* is advanced. The paper on which the bulk of the manuscript is written supports this dating. The ink is said to be the same throughout, but this has not been tested chemically.

There is no reference in the manuscripts to the Map, but a few legends on it seem to have been obtained from *The Tartar Relation*. These legends are written in a smaller hand, and with a sharper pen. Interspersed among the paper leaves are a few leaves of parchment, integral parts of the text. These are dissimilar to the parchment on which the Map is drawn, except for its conjugate. The purpose of the detailed palaeographical and bibliographical disquisitions is to establish the date of the Map as 1440 or thereabouts. It may be noted that this attribution rests solely on palaeographical opinions of the similarity of the hands and on the watermark in the paper.

To turn to the Map in detail: this is a roughly elliptical world map, rather crudely drawn, the coastline in a style suggestive of medieval charts. As is usual with these, there are no meridians or parallels; nor is there a scale or any graphical indication of direction. All vignettes and decoration are absent. The names are not overnumerous, but there are legends, as mentioned above, probably drawn from *The Tartar Relation*. The Map, as Skelton shows, is unquestionably based on the circular World Map by the Venetian cartographer, Andrea Bianco, 1436. With some exceptions, the place-names are similar, and there are similar errors in their positions.

The feature of the Map which has naturally aroused world-wide interest is the north-west section. Here two islands are depicted, the smaller labelled *Gronelāda*; the larger, to the south-west, has the inscription *Vinlanda Insula a Byarno reperta et leipho socijs*, a reference to a Norse expedition by Bjarni and Leif. Above is a longish legend referring to a visit to Vinland by Bishop Eirik Gnupsson in 1117 A.D.[2]

The outline of Greenland bears a certain resemblance to that of the island as we know it today. "Vinland," which has two large rivers flowing north-eastwards to the ocean, is held to represent the mainland of North-east America. The Map as a whole is therefore claimed to be "the first pre-Columbian map of America," and to be based on the Norse voyages.

THERE ARE A NUMBER of difficulties to be overcome in making this thesis acceptable, and, indeed, Skelton sets many of them out clearly. At the period from which the Vinland portion is assumed to date, *i.e.*, 12th–13th centuries, the navigators of Northern Europe did not make charts; they relied on written sailing directions. Secondly, this Map (or type of map), if it existed then, has left no trace in the early cartography of the North. Skelton, however, believes that actual "experience" is embodied in it. One argument, on which he relies heavily, is that the outline of Greenland is so good that it *must* be based on the result of a running survey made on a voyage of circumnavigation. This "resemblance" to the modern Greenland outline seems to me to be far-fetched. One could equally well

[2] Bjarni Herjolfsson's landfall is generally assigned to the year 985. Leif Eiriksson is not otherwise known to have made a joint voyage with him. The Icelandic annals date the Bishop's voyage as 1121 (Skelton, pp. 140–1). No undisputed archaeological evidence for the Norse voyages has yet been found on the American mainland.

Rural Planning in Developing Countries

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The Conference enabled scientists and political leaders of developing countries to exchange views on comprehensive planning of agriculture. The three main subjects discussed are: agricultural planning and rural development, the human factor in agricultural development and agricultural research, extension and education. *452 pp.*, 56s.

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argue that it is a better attempt at South America—indeed the main features of that coastline could be indicated: the Gulf of Venezuela, the mouth of the Amazon, and the Rio de la Plata, while the indentations of the Chile coast appear to be represented. (It affords some amusement to note that Mr. Painter sees plausible representations of Australia and New Guinea among the Far East islands—but, understandably, he regards this as having no significance.)

Many would argue that the Greenland outline appears too accurate to have been produced at that time. It is therefore beside the point to discuss whether such a voyage would or would not have been possible in the milder ice conditions then prevailing. With the instruments and technique of those days, no such accurate outline would have resulted.

Any connection with the Norse voyagers rests on the map legends. Skelton makes out a case for there being sailing directions behind the map of the Northern Atlantic. I find it difficult to accept this in view of the erroneous outline of the Scandinavian peninsula. In a map of this type, also, it is dangerous to attempt to relate latitudes from one side of the ocean to the other. With every respect for the erudition displayed, I consider the authors have set too high a value on this Map. If we leave this controversial section, and examine other areas, we may be able to form a better idea of its character as a whole.

Look, for instance, at the nomenclature of the island groups of the Atlantic, a subject in which the compiler may be assumed to have more than a passing interest.

There is something distinctly odd here. Apart from *Gronelāda* and *Vinlanda*, there are four groups of names, about each of which there is something disturbing—none of them can be paralleled on surviving charts. From north to south they are:

> Isolanda Ibernica. Iceland; the first word is perhaps a careless writing of *Islanda*. The confusion with *Ibernia* is not unusual. Skelton suggests an elision: *Iso[la Is]landa*.
>
> Desiderate insule: approximately in the latitude of northern Portugal. This form is never found on other charts. I suggest this is the cartographer's rendering of *Insule deserte*, which is frequently found near this position.
>
> Magnae Insulae Beati Brandani Branziliae dictae. *Branziliae* is not found on any other map. It is presumably related to the name *Brasil* or *Brazil* which occurs in various positions on charts, but not in association with St. Brandan.
>
> Beate isule fortune. This is the least strange, though St. Brandan is usually associated with this group (*e.g.*, Bianco, 1448: *Y*ª *fortunat de S*ª *beati brandan*).

These comments are based on Skelton (pp. 137–8). I would add two further remarks. "Branzilia" appears to have been formed in the same way as "Isolando," *i.e.*, Bran[dan Bra]zilia. The name attached to England is *"Anglia terra insula."* Surely this is almost dog Latin, obtained by translating literally the Bianco form—"engeltera"—hardly the work of a scholar?

Now, this is the nomenclature of an important portion of the Map, and one is compelled to ask: "Why this mystification or even falsification?"

If we turn to the Eastern margins of the world map, we find an equally curious situation. There is not the space which the Western margins provide for islands and legends, as the map comes close to the edge of the parchment. Instead, the compiler has cut islands out of the mainland and given them fanciful, non-specific, names: in the north, *"Terre non satis perscrutate . . ."*; *"Insule Sub aquilone zamoyedorum"*; and *"Postreme Insule."* There are no clear textual parallels in Carpini's *Tartar Relation* for these names. By "creating" these islands, he

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produces a great inland sea, *"Magnum mare Tartarorum,"* which again has no counterpart in any other map for shape or name, but which Skelton seeks to establish as a possible interpretation of the Carpini text (though in this he is not supported by Mr. Painter).

The Southern border of the Map is also revealing, particularly the manner in which the southern coastline of Africa was established. In the first place, there is on Bianco's world map no gulf formed by a reversed arc as stated in the text; what has been mistaken for this is simply a counterpart of the feature in the extreme north; the coastline, partly covered by colour, is clearly visible, marking off this area from the ocean. For this reason, *Sinus Ethiopicus* cannot be accepted as a correct reading of *nidus ahimalion* on Bianco. In view of the two dragons portrayed, I suggest "nest, or lair, of animals" as a translation of *nidus animalium*.

More important than this, it is plain on inspection of Plate VI that the coastline on the "Vinland Map" was determined by a fortuitous fold on the Bianco original, which neatly cuts off the supposed *"Sinus Ethiopicus."* One interesting conclusion, among several that may be drawn from this, is that the compiler of the "Vinland Map" was working from this very copy of Bianco's which, as far as is known, has never left Venice. It is thus possible that the world map was copied quite a considerable time after 1436, according to the period required for the fold to develop.

To RECAPITULATE BRIEFLY what this examination of the two world maps reveals. The island nomenclature of the Western section of the "Vinland Map" appears to be made up *ad hoc*; the Southern margin of Africa has been obtained by adopting a fold in the model; the Eastern section reveals the manufacture of islands, to which somewhat fanciful names have been given.

One legitimate conclusion can be drawn from this analysis. The copyist's treatment of his world model debars him from serious consideration as a cosmographer or cartographer. Further, his abilities thus revealed lend no support whatever to the authenticity of the Vinland section; in fact, it is left open to very serious doubt.

What was the purpose of the copyist in providing a world map in which islands form a major feature, but in which either their form or their nomenclature are patently peculiar? This is a curious setting to accompany Vinland. A cynic might suggest that the purpose was to produce a world map which could not strictly be regarded as a close copy of a well-known type, and into which the "Vinland" section might be introduced. I do not propose, however, to speculate upon possible ways in which this view might be reconciled with the palaeographical evidence put forward in this book.

The following deductions can, I believe, be legitimately made from the above analysis.

1. The "Vinland Map" is based almost entirely upon Bianco's world map. It is unnecessary to search for possible alternative sources or models. The man who produced it was a copyist, not a cartographer.

2. The Bianco map, used by the copyist, is in the Venetian Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, and has been in Venice from the first.

3. This map is dated A.D. 1436 or thereabouts. Allowing, say, fifty years for the fold to develop, we may date the making of the "Vinland Map" as *later* than 1486.

4. The "Vinland Map" is probably post-Columbian. Its representation of Vinland is not of exceptional significance, and possibly derives in part from a reading of the (Norse) Sagas (which were first written down about 1125, but do not refer to Vinland as an island).

G. R. Crone

INDEX TO VOLUME XXV

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Intellectuals & Politics

The Society of Man. By Louis J. Halle. *Chatto & Windus*, 25s.

The subject of this book is a very old problem, the connection between theory and practice. The author takes a fresh look at it and comes out with some searching, lively, and original suggestions. The fact that he has been for more than twelve years an official of the State Department and for almost as long a professor of political science has clearly influenced his thinking, and lends a certain authority to his views. Dr. Halle would have liked, one suspects, to believe with Marx in the "unity of theory of practice," but experience as well as reflection has taught him that these two realms are worlds apart. Even so, he thinks there is an urgent need to bring them closer together by the right kind of mediation.

What he clearly considers to be the wrong kind of mediation is that envisaged by a long tradition in political philosophy, according to which the practical politician ought in the world of affairs to act out programmes that the theorist has thought up in his study. From Plato in Syracuse to Professor Harold Laski at Transport House, this kind of intellectual back-seat driver has seldom been a wholly welcome figure, and perhaps even less often a useful one. The task of mediation of which Dr. Halle speaks must be undertaken, he suggests, by another kind of man.

The misfortune of the intellectual, according to Dr. Halle, is his proneness to dwell in the "orderly conceptual world of thought" and to fancy that the "chaotic, existential world" either conforms or could be made to conform to the image that exists in the mind. Dr. Halle illustrates his argument with the case-histories of two 19th centuries which are still with us despite the way the world has changed, namely, Marxism and Nationalism. He sees Marx as a visionary who took his knowledge from books and brought forth a rational model of a just political order, the classless society, together with an account of the steps by which it would be actualised. Events in the external world have not confirmed these predictions. Yet Marx's followers have not been dismayed. The mind has many ways of resisting unwelcome facts. Lenin's effort to "bridge the gap between the conceptual and the existential," as Dr. Halle puts it, was plainly the most audacious: having failed to rally a proletarian majority to enact the Marxist role of dictatorship, Lenin adopted the tactic of *calling* the minority he commanded the majority. This, says Dr. Halle, is "nominalism"; and it is of course the ancient trick of creating a wilderness and naming it peace. The trick works best with the educated; as Rousseau once said, the less sophisticated are the less easily deceived.

Nationalism has no single great prophet, but a multitude of minor ones. Dr. Halle argues (and I agree) that Nationalism has become an anachronism. It belongs to the age of declining dynasties, when the idea of a self-sufficient nation-wide state could be made to seem attractive. Now that Western Europe (the birthplace of Nationalism as an ideology) is becoming increasingly integrated, with people coming to think and even feel as Europeans, the mainspring of Nationalism, which is the will of people to be members of an independent sovereign state, is losing its drive. What remains is Afro-Asian nationalism, but this is but a shadow of the old ideology, more a form of anti-imperialism, the will to keep the old guard out rather than the will to exalt the state.

Nationalistic fervour has caused as much bloodshed in recent generations as religious fervour caused before the age of reason, and the ordinary man today is becoming as healthily suspicious of ideologues as were his ancestors of priests. What we can begin to hope for now, according to Dr. Halle, is for a kind of statesmanship which will mediate between the theoretical and the practical with the aim of making our "conceptual world" conform to the "existential world." Here he might seem to be placing himself on the side of Aristotle against Plato, but for the fact that he is somewhat against both when he puts his faith rather in the practical man, than the theorist, as mediator: "a formal education may, by exalting the conceptual above the existential, disqualify a man for mediation." But Dr. Halle is no pessimist. His book ends with the bracing suggestion that the "existential world" is moving by a process of "evolution" much faster than our theories are being modified, and that we may find ourselves living under a universal system which *no* theorist foresees.

Maurice Cranston

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AUTHORS & CRITICS

Nabokov's Reply

IN REGARD to my novels my position is different. I cannot imagine myself writing a letter-to-the-editor in reply to an unfavourable review, let alone devoting almost a whole day to composing a magazine article of explanation, retaliation, and protest. I have waited at least thirty years to take notice—casual and amused notice—of some scurvy abuse I met with in my "V. Sirin" disguise but that pertains to bibliography. My inventions, my circles, my special islands are infinitely safe from exasperated readers. Nor have I ever yielded to the wild desire to thank a benevolent critic—or at least to express somehow my tender awareness of this or that friendly writer's sympathy and understanding, which in some extraordinary way seem always to coincide with talent and originality, an interesting, though not quite inexplicable phenomenon.

If, however, adverse criticism happens to be directed not at those acts of fancy, but at such a matter-of-fact work of reference as my annotated translation of *Eugene Onegin* (hereafter referred to as *EO*), other considerations take over. Unlike my novels, *EO* possesses an ethical side, moral and human elements. It reflects the compiler's honesty or dishonesty, skill or sloppiness. If told I am a bad poet, I smile; but if told I am a poor scholar, I reach for my heaviest dictionary.

I do not think I have received all the reviews that appeared after *EO* was published; I fail to locate a few that I was sure I had in my chaotic study; but judging by the numerous ones that did reach me, one might conclude that trying to translate an author literally represents an approach entirely devised by me; that it had never been heard of before; and that there was something offensive and even sinister about such a method and undertaking. Promoters and producers of what Anthony Burgess calls "arty translations," carefully rhymed, pleasantly modulated versions containing, say, eighteen per cent of sense plus thirty-two of nonsense and fifty of neutral padding, are I think more prudent than they realise. While ostensibly tempted by impossible dreams, they are subliminally impelled by a kind of self-preservation. The "arty translation" protects them by concealing and camouflaging ignorance or incomplete information or the fuzzy edge of limited knowledge. Stark literalism, on the other hand, would expose their fragile frame to unknown and incalculable perils.

IT IS QUITE NATURAL, then, that the solidly unionised professional paraphrast experiences a surge of dull hatred and fear, and in some cases real panic, when confronted with the possibility that a shift in fashion, or the influence of an adventurous publishing house, may suddenly remove from his head the cryptic rose-bush he carries or the maculated shield erected between him and the spectre of inexorable knowledge. As a result the canned music of rhymed versions is enthusiastically advertised, and accepted, and the sacrifice of textual precision applauded as something rather heroic, whereas only suspicion and bloodhounds await the gaunt, graceless literalist groping around in despair for the obscure word that would satisfy impassioned fidelity and accumulating in the process a wealth of information which only makes the advocates of pretty camouflage tremble or sneer.

These observations, although suggested by specific facts, should not be construed in a strictly *pro-domo-sua* sense. My *EO* falls short of the ideal crib. It is still not close enough and not ugly enough. In future editions I plan to defowlerise it still more drastically. I think I shall turn it entirely into utilitarian prose, with a still bumpier brand of English, rebarbative barricades of square brackets and tattered banners of reprobate words, in order to eliminate the last vestiges of bourgeois poesy and concession to rhythm. This is something to look forward to. For the moment, all I wish is merely to put on record my utter disgust with the general attitude, amoral and philistine, towards literalism.

IT IS INDEED wonderful how indifferent critics are to the amount of unwilful deceit going on in the translation trade. I recall once opening a copy of Bely's *Petersburg* in English, and lighting upon a monumental howler in a

FROM TIME TO TIME *in this department a writer is given an opportunity to reply polemically to his reviewers.*

Vladimir Nabokov's four-volume edition of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin *was published by the Bollingen Foundation (New York) and Routledge (London). Among Mr. Nabokov's novels are* Lolita *(1955),* Pale Fire *(1962), and* The Gift *(1963). There is also his critical study of Gogol (1947) and a volume of memoirs,* Speak Memory *(1951). He contributed a study on "Pushkin and Gannibal" to the July 1962* ENCOUNTER.

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famous passage about a blue coupé which had been hopelessly discoloured by the translator's understanding *kuboviy* (which means "blue") as "cubic"! This has remained a model and a symbol. But who cares and why bother? Mr. Rosen in *The Saturday Review* (28 November 1964) ends his remarks on rhymed versions of *Eugene Onegin* with the expression of a rapturous hope: "It only remains for a talented poet like Robert Lowell to take advantage [of these versions] to produce a poem in English that really sings and soars." But this is an infernal vision to me who can distinguish in the most elaborate imitation the simple schoolboy howler from the extraneous imagery within which it is so pitifully imbedded. Again—what does it matter? "It is part of the act," as Mr. Edmund Wilson would say. The incredible errors in the translations from the Russian which are being published nowadays with frenetic frequency, are dismissed as trivial blemishes that only a pedant would note.

Even Professor Muchnic, who in a recent issue of the *New York Review of Books* delicately takes Mr. Guy Daniels apart as if he were an unfamiliar and possibly defective type of coffee machine, neglects to point out that in both versions of Lermontov's poem which she quotes—Daniels' effort and Baring's very minor (*pace* Mirski) poem—the same grotesque imp blows a strident trumpet. For we have here an admirable example of one of those idiomatic freaks that for reasons of mental balance foreigners should not even try to rationalise. Lermontov's Russian goes: *Sosedka est' u nih odna... Kak vspomnish', kak davno rasstalis'!* And the literal sense is: "They have a certain neighbour (*fem.*)... Oh, to think how long ago we parted!" The form *vspomnish'* looks like the second person singular of "remember," but in this intonational arrangement it should be the first person in literal translation since it is addressed by the speaker to himself. Now, both versionists being ignorant of idiomatic Russian did not hesitate to use the second person (though actually the result gives a painfully didactic twist to the sentence, which should have made the translator think twice). Baring's version (which Professor Muchnic, I am sorry to say, calls "a wonderfully precise reproduction of the sense, the idiom") runs: "We had a neighbour... and *you remember* I and she...." While the more humble Daniels translates: "There was a girl as *you'll recall*...." I have underlined the shared boner. The point is not that one version is better than the other (frankly there is not much to choose between the two); the point is that unwittingly *both* use the same wrong person as if all paraphrasts were interconnected omphalically by an ectoplasmic band.

Despite the fierce attitude towards literalism, I still find a little surprising the intensity of human passions that my rather dry, rather dull work provokes. Hack reviewers rush to the defence of the orthodox Soviet publicists whom I "chastise" and of whom they have never heard before. A more or less displaced Russian in New York maintains that my commentary is nothing but a collection of obscure trifles and that besides he remembers having heard it all many years ago in Gorki from his high-school teacher, A. A. Artamonov.

The word "mollitude" which I use a few times has been now so often denounced that it threatens to become almost a household word, like "nymphet." One of my most furious and inarticulate attackers seems to be an intimate friend of Belinski (born 1811), as well as of all the paraphrasts I "persecute." The fury is, I suppose, pardonable and noble, but there would be no sense in my reacting to it. I shall also ignore some of the slapstick—such as a little item in *The New Republic* (3 April 1965) which begins, "Inspector Nabokov has revisited the scene of the crime in *L'affaire Oneguine*" and is prompted by a sordid little grudge of which the editor, presumably, had no knowledge. A reviewer writing in the *Noviy Zhurnal* (No. 77), Mr. Moris Fridberg—whom I am afraid I shall be accused of having invented—employs a particularly hilarious brand of bad Russian (*kak izvestno dlya lyubogo studenta,* as known "for" every student) to introduce the interesting idea that textual fidelity is unecessary because "in itself the subject-matter of [Pushkin's] work is not very important." He goes on to complain that I do not say a word about such Pushkinists as Modzalevski, Tomashevski, Bondi, Shchyogolev and Gofman—a statement that proves he has not only not read my commentary, but has not even consulted the Index; and on top of that he confuses me with Professor Arndt whose preliminary remarks about his "writing not for experts but students" Mr. Fridberg ascribes to me. A still more luckless gentleman (in the *Los Angeles Times*) is so incensed by the pride and prejudice of my commentary that he virtually chokes on his wrath and after enticingly entitling his article "Nabokov Fails as a Translator" has to break it off abruptly without having made one single reference to the translation itself. Among the more serious articles there is a long one in the *New York Times Book Review*, 28 June 1964, by Mr. Ernest Simmons, who obligingly corrects what he takes to be a misprint in One: XXV: 5; "Chadaev," he says, should be "Chaadaev"; but from my note to that passage he should have seen that "Chadaev" is one of the three forms of that name, and also happens

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to be Pushkin's own spelling in that particular line which otherwise would not have scanned.

FOR OBVIOUS REASONS I cannot discuss all the sympathetic reviews. I shall only refer to some of them in order to acknowledge certain helpful suggestions and corrections. I am grateful to John Bayley (*The Observer*, 29 November 1964) for drawing my attention to what he calls —much too kindly, alas—"the only slip" in my commentary: *"Auf allen Gipfeln"* (in the reference to Goethe's poem) should be corrected to *Ueber allen Gipfeln*. (I can add at least one other: My note to Two: XXXV: 8 contains a silly blunder and should be violently deleted.) Anthony Burgess in ENCOUNTER has suddenly and conclusively abolished my sentimental fondness for FitzGerald by showing how he falsified the "witty metaphysical tent-maker's" actual metaphors in *"Awake! for morning in the bowl of Night...."* John Wain, in *The Listener* (29 April 1965), by a sheer feat of style has made me at once sorry for one of my "victims" and weak with laughter: "This [the discussion of prosody], by the way, is the section in which Arthur Hugh Clough gets described as a poetaster; the effect is like that of seeing an innocent bystander suddenly buried by a fall of snow from a roof...." J. Thomas Shaw, in *The Russian Review* (April 1965), observes that I should have promoted Pushkin after his graduation to the tenth civil rank ("collegiate secretary") instead of leaving him stranded on the fourteenth rung of the ladder; but I cannot find in my copy the misprinted Derzhavin date which he also cites; and I strongly object to his listing James Joyce, whom I revere, among those writers whom I condemn "in contemptuous asides" (apparently Mr. Shaw has dreadfully misunderstood what I say about Joyce's characters falling asleep by applying it to Joyce's readers). Finally, the anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (28 January 1965) is perfectly right when he says that in my notes I do not discuss Pushkin's art in sufficient detail; he makes a number of attractive suggestions which, together with those of two other reviewers and several correspondents, would make a fifth volume, or at least a very handsome *Festschrift*. The same reviewer is much too lenient when he remarks that "a careful scrutiny of every line has failed to reveal a single careless error in translation." There are at least two: in Four: XLIII: 2, the word "but" should be deleted, and in Five: XI: 3, "lawn" should be "plain."

THE LONGEST, most ambitious, most captious, and, alas, most reckless, article is Mr. Edmund Wilson's in the *New York Review of Books* (15 July 1965), and this I now select for a special examination.

A number of earnest simpletons consider Mr. Wilson to be an authority in my field ("he misses few of Nabokov's lapses," as one hasty well-wisher puts it in a letter to the *NYR*, on 26 August), and no doubt such delusions should not be tolerated; still, I am not sure that the necessity to defend my work from blunt jabs and incompetent blame would have been a sufficient incentive for me to discuss that article, had I not been moved to do so by the unusual, unbelievable, and highly entertaining opportunity that I am unexpectedly given by Mr. Wilson himself of refuting practically every item of criticism in his enormous piece. The mistakes and misstatements in it form an uninterrupted series so complete as to seem artistic in reverse, making one wonder if, perhaps, it had not been woven that way on purpose to be turned into something pertinent and coherent when reflected in a looking-glass. I am unaware of any other such instance in the history of literature. It is a polemicist's dream come true, and one must be a poor sportsman to disdain what it offers.

As Mr. Wilson points out with such disarming good humour at the beginning of his piece, he and I are old friends. I fully reciprocate "the warm affection sometimes chilled by exasperation" that he says he feels for me. When I first came to America a quarter of a century ago, he wrote to me, and called on me, and was most kind to me in various matters, not necessarily pertaining to his profession. I have always been grateful to him for the tact he showed in not reviewing any of my novels while constantly saying flattering things about me in the so-called literary circles where I seldom revolve. We have had many exhilarating talks, have exchanged many frank letters. A patient confidant of his long and hopeless infatuation with the Russian language and literature, I have invariably done my best to explain to him his monstrous mistakes of pronunciation, grammar, and interpretation. As late as 1957, at one of our last meetings, in Ithaca, upstate New York, where I lived at the time, we both realised with amused dismay that, despite my frequent comments on Russian prosody, he still could not scan Russian verse. Upon being challenged to read *Evgeniy Onegin* aloud, he started to perform with great gusto, garbling every second word, and turning Pushkin's iambic line into a kind of spastic anapaest with a lot of jaw-twisting haws and rather endearing little barks that utterly jumbled the rhythm and soon had us both in stitches.

In the present case, I greatly regret that Mr.

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Wilson did not consult me about his perplexities, as he used to in the past. Here are some of the ghastly blunders that might have been so easily avoided.

"Why," asks Mr. Wilson, "should Nabokov call the word *netu* an old-fashioned and dialect form of *net*. It is in constant colloquial use and what I find one usually gets for an answer when one asks for some book in the Soviet bookstore in New York." Mr. Wilson has mistaken the common colloquial *netu* which means "there is not," "we do not have it," etc., for the obsolete *netu* which he has never heard and which as I explain in my note to Three: III: 12, is a form of *net* in the sense of "not so" (the opposite of "yes").

"The character called *yo*," Mr. Wilson continues, "is pronounced . . . more like 'yaw' than like the 'yo' in 'yonder'." Mr. Wilson should not try to teach me how to pronounce this, or any other, Russian vowel. My "yo" is the standard rendering of the sound. The "yaw" sound he suggests is grotesque and quite wrong. I can hear Mr. Wilson—whose accent in Russian I know so well—asking that bookseller of his for *"Myawrtvie Dushi"* ("Dead Souls"). No wonder he did not get it.

"Vse," according to Mr. Wilson (explaining two varieties of the Russian for "all"), "is applied to people, and *vsyo* to things." This is a meaningless pronouncement. *Vse* is merely the plural of *ves'* (masculine), *vsya* (feminine), and *vsyo* (neuter).

Mr. Wilson is puzzled by my assertion that the adjective *zloy* is the only one-syllable adjective in Russian. "How about the one-syllable predicative adjectives?" he asks. The answer is simple: I am not talking of predicative adjectives. Why drag them in? Such forms as *mudr* ("is wise"), *glup* ("is stupid"), *ploh* ("is very sick indeed") are not adjectives at all, but adverbish mongrels which may differ in sense from the related adjectives.

In discussing the word *pochuya* Mr. Wilson confuses it with *chuya* ("sensing") (see my letter about this word in the *New Statesman*, 23 April 1965) and says that had Pushkin used *pochuyav*, only then should I have been entitled to put "having sensed." "Where," queries Mr. Wilson, "is our scrupulous literalness?" Right here. My friend is unaware that despite the different endings, *pochuyav* and *pochuya* happen to be interchangeable, both being "past gerunds," and both meaning exactly the same thing.

ALL THIS IS RATHER extraordinary. Every time Mr. Wilson starts examining a Russian phrase he makes some ludicrous slip. His didactic purpose is defeated by such errors, as it is also by the strange tone of his article. Its mixture of pompous aplomb and peevish ignorance is hardly conducive to a sensible discussion of Pushkin's language and mine—or indeed any language, for, as we shall presently see, Mr. Wilson's use of English is also singularly imprecise and misleading.

First of all it is simply not true to say, as he does, that in my review of Professor Arndt's translation (*NYR*, 30 August 1964) "Nabokov dwelt especially on what he regarded as Professor Arndt's Germanisms and other infelicities of phrasing, without apparently being aware of how vulnerable he himself was." I dwelled especially on Arndt's mistranslations. What Mr. Wilson regards as my infelicities may be more repellent to him for psychological reasons than "anything in Arndt," but they belong to another class of error than Arndt's or any other paraphrast's casual blunders, and what is more Mr. Wilson knows it. I dare him to deny that he deliberately confuses the issue by applying the term "niggling attack" to an indignant examination of the insults dealt out to Pushkin's masterpiece in yet another arty translation. Mr. Wilson affirms that "the only characteristic Nabokov trait" in my translation (aside from an innate "sado-masochistic" urge "to torture both the reader and himself," as Mr. Wilson puts it in a clumsy attempt to stick a particularly thick and rusty pin into my effigy) is my "addiction to rare and unfamiliar words." It does not occur to him that I may have rare and unfamiliar things to convey; that is his loss. He goes on, however, to say that in view of my declared intention to provide students with a trot such words are "entirely inappropriate" here, since it would be more to the point for the student to look up the Russian word than the English one. I shall stop only one moment to consider Mr. Wilson's pathetic assumption that a student can read Pushkin, or any other Russian poet, by "looking up" every word (after all, the result of this simple method is far too apparent in Mr. Wilson's own mistranslations and misconceptions), or that a reliable and complete *Russko-angliyskiy slovar'* not only exists (it does not) but is more easily available to the student than, say, the second unabridged edition (1960) of Webster's, which I really must urge Mr. Wilson to acquire. Even if that miraculous *slovar'* did exist, there would still be the difficulty of choosing, without my help, the right shade between two near synonyms and avoiding, without my guidance, the trap-falls of idiomatic phrases no longer in use.

EDMUND WILSON SEES HIMSELF (not quite candidly, I am afraid, and certainly quite erroneously) as a commonsensical, artless, aver-

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age reader with a natural vocabulary of, say, six hundred basic words. No doubt such an imaginary reader may be sometimes puzzled and upset by the tricky terms I find necessary to use here and there—very much here and there. But how many such innocents will tackle *EO* anyway? And what does Mr. Wilson mean by implying I should not use words that in the process of lexicographic evolution begin to occur only at the level of a "fairly comprehensive dictionary"? When does a dictionary cease being an abridged one and start growing "fairly" and then "extremely" comprehensive? Is the sequence: vest-pocket, coat-pocket, great-coat-pocket, my three bookshelves, Mr. Wilson's rich library? And should the translator simply omit any reference to an idea or an object if the only right word—a word he happens to know as a teacher or a naturalist, or an inventor of words—is discoverable in the revised edition of a standard dictionary but not in its earlier edition or *vice versa*? Disturbing possibilities! Nightmarish doubts! And how does the harassed translator know that somewhere on the library ladder he has just stopped short of Wilson's Fairly Comprehensive and may safely use "polyhedral" but not "lingonberry"? (Incidentally, the percentage of what Mr. Wilson calls "dictionary words" in my translation is really so absurdly small that I have difficulty in finding examples.)

Mr. Wilson can hardly be unaware that once a writer chooses to youthen or resurrect a word, it lives again, sobs again, stumbles all over the cemetery in doublet and trunk hose, and will keep annoying stodgy grave-diggers as long as that writer's book endures. In several instances, English archaisms have been used in my *EO* not merely to match Russian antiquated words but to revive a nuance of meaning present in the ordinary Russian term but lost in the English one. Such terms are not meant to be idiomatic. The phrases I decide upon aspire towards literality, not readability. They are steps in the ice, pitons in the sheer rock of fidelity. Some are mere signal-words whose only purpose is to suggest or indicate that a certain pet term of Pushkin's has recurred at that point. Others have been chosen for their Gallic touch implicit in this or that Russian attempt to imitate a French turn of phrase. All have pedigrees of agony and rejection and reinstatement, and should be treated as convalescents and ancient orphans, and not hooted at as impostors by a critic who says he admires some of my books. I do not care if a word is "archaic" or "dialect" or "slang"; I am an eclectic democrat in this matter, and whatever suits me, goes. My method may be wrong but it is a method, and a genuine critic's job should have been to examine the method itself instead of crossly fishing out of my pond some of the oddities with which I had deliberately stocked it.

LET ME NOW turn to what Mr. Wilson calls my "infelicities" and "aberrations" and explain to him why I use the words he does not like or does not know.

In referring to Onegin's not being attracted by the picture of family life Pushkin in Four: XIII: 5 uses the phrase *semeystvennoy kartinoy*. The modern term is *semeynoy kartinoy* and had Pushkin chosen it, I might have put "family picture." But I had to indicate the presence of Pushkin's rarer word and used therefore the rarer "familistic" as a signal word.

In order to indicate the archaic note in *vospomnya* (used by Pushkin in One: XLVII: 6–7 instead of *vspomnya*, or *vspomniv*, or *vspominaya*) as well as to suggest the deep sonorous diction of both lines (*vospomnya prezhnih let romanī, vospomnya*, etc.), I had to find something more reverberating and evocative than "recalling intrigues of past years," etc., and whether Mr. Wilson (or Mr. N. for that matter) likes it or not, nothing more suitable than "rememorating" for *vospomnya* can be turned up.

Mr. Wilson also dislikes "curvate," a perfectly plain and technically appropriate word which I have used to render *krivīe* because I felt that "curved" or "crooked" did not quite do justice to Onegin's regularly bent manicure scissors.

Similarly, not a passing whim but the considerations of prolonged thought led me to render Four: IX: 5 *privīchkoy zhizni izbalovan* as "spoiled by a habitude of life." I needed the Gallic touch and found it preferable in allusive indefinitude—Pushkin's line is elegantly ambiguous—to "habit of life" or "life's habit." "Habitude" is the right and good word here. It is not labelled "dialect" or "obsolete" in Webster's great dictionary.

Another perfectly acceptable word is "rummer" which I befriended because of its kinship with *ryumka*, and because I wished to find for the *ryumki* of Five: XXIX: 4 a more generalised wineglass than the champagne flutes of XXXII: 8–9 which are also *ryumki*. If Mr. Wilson consults my notes, he will see that on second thought I demoted the non-obsolete but rather oversized cups of XXIX to jiggers of vodka tossed down before the first course.

I cannot understand why Mr. Wilson is puzzled by "dit" (Five: VIII: 13) which I chose instead of "ditty" to parallel "kit" instead of "kitty" in the next line, and which will now, I hope, enter or reenter the language. Possibly, the masculine rhyme I needed here may have led me a little astray from the servile path of literalism (Pushkin has simply *pesnya*—"song"). But it is not incomprehensible; after all, anybody who knows what, say, "titty" means ("in nail-making the part that ejects the half-finished nail") can readily understand what "tit" means ("the part that ejects the finished nail").

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NEXT ON MR. WILSON'S LIST of inappropriate words is "gloam." It is a poetic word, and Keats has used it. It renders perfectly the *mgla* of the gathering evening shadows in Four: XLVII: 8, as well as the soft darkness of trees in Three: XVI: 11. It is better than "murk," a dialect word that Mr. Wilson uses for *mgla*, with my sanction, in another passage—the description of a wintry dawn.

In the same passage which both I and Mr. Wilson have translated, my "shippon" is as familiar to anyone who knows the English countryside as Mr. Wilson's "byre" should be to a New England farmer. Both "shippon" and "byre" are unknown to pocket-dictionary readers; both are listed in the three-centimetre-thick Penguin (1965). But I prefer "shippon" for *hlev* because I see its shape as clearly as that of the Russian cowhouse it resembles, but see only a Vermont barn when I try to visualise "byre."

Then there is "scrab": "he scrabs the poor thing up," *bednyazhku tsaptsarap* (One: XIV: 8). This *tsaptsarap*—a "verbal interjection" presupposing (as Pushkin notes when employing it in another poem) the existence of the artificial verb *tsaptsarapat'*, jocular and onomatopoeic—combines *tsapat'* ("to snatch") with *tsarapat'* ("to scratch"). I rendered Pushkin's uncommon word by the uncommon "scrab up," which combines "grab" and "scratch," and am proud of it. It is in fact a wonderful find.

I shall not analyse the phrase "in his lunes" that Mr. Wilson for good measure has included among my "aberrations." It occurs not in my translation, which he is discussing, but in the flow of my ordinary comfortable descriptive prose which we can discuss another time.

WE NOW COME to one of the chief offenders: "mollitude." For Pushkin's Gallic *nega* I needed an English counterpart of *mollesse* as commonly used in such phrases as *il perdit ses jeunes années dans la mollesse et la volupté* or *son cœur nage dans la mollesse*. It is incorrect to say, as Mr. Wilson does, that readers can never have encountered "mollitude." Readers of Browning have. In this connection Mr. Wilson wonders how I would have translated *chistih neg* in one of Pushkin's last elegies—would I have said "pure mollitudes"? It so happens that I translated that little poem thirty years ago, and when Mr. Wilson locates my version (in the Introduction to one of my novels) he will note that the genitive plural of *nega* is a jot different in sense from the singular.

In Mr. Wilson's collection of *bêtes noires* my favourite is "sapajou." He wonders why I render *dostoyno starih obez'yan* as "worthy of old sapajous" and not as "worthy of old monkeys." True, *obez'yana* means any kind of monkey but it so happens that neither "monkey" nor "ape" is good enough in the context.

"Sapajou" (which tecnically is applied to two genera of neotropical monkeys) has in French a colloquial sense of "ruffian," "lecher," "ridiculous chap." Now, in lines 1–2 and 9–11 of Four: VII ("the less we love a woman, the easier 'tis to be liked by her . . . but that grand game is worthy of old sapajous of our forefathers' vaunted times") Pushkin echoes a moralistic passage in his own letter written in French from Kishinev to his young brother in Moscow in the autumn of 1822, that is seven months before beginning *Eugene Onegin* and two years before reaching Canto Four. The passage, well known to readers of Pushkin, goes: *Moins on aime une femme et plus on est sûr de l'avoir . . . mais cette jouissance est digne d'un vieux sapajou du dix-huitième siècle*. Not only could I not resist the temptation of retranslating the *obez'yan* of the canto into the Anglo-French "sapajous" of the letter, but I was also looking forward to somebody's pouncing on that word and allowing me to retaliate with that wonderfully satisfying reference. Mr. Wilson obliged—and here it is.

"THERE ARE ALSO actual errors of English," continues Mr. Wilson, and gives three examples: "dwelled," which I prefer to "dwelt"; "about me," which in Two: XXXIX: 14, is used to render *obo mne* instead of the better "of me"; and the word "loaden," which Mr. Wilson "had never heard before." But "dwelled" is marked in my dictionary only "less usual"—not "incorrect"; "remind about" is not quite impossible (*e.g.*, "remind me about it tomorrow"); as to "loaden," which Mr. Wilson suggests replacing by "loadened," *his* English wobbles, not mine, since "loaden" *is* the correct past participle and participial adjective of "load."

In the course of his strange defence of Arndt's version—in which according to Mr. Wilson I had been assiduously tracking down Germanisms—he asserts that "it is not difficult to find Russianisms in Nabokov" and turns up *one*, or the shadow of one ("left us" should be "has left us" in a passage that I cannot trace). Surely there must be more than one such slip in a work fifteen hundred pages long devoted by a Russian to a Russian poem; however, the two other Russsianisms Mr. Wilson lists are the figments of his own ignorance:

In translating *slushat' shum morskoy* (Eight: IV: 11) I chose the archaic and poetic transitive turn "to listen the sound of the sea" because the relevant passage has in Pushkin a stylised archaic tone. Mr. Wilson may not care for this turn—I do not much care for it either—but it is silly of him to assume that I lapsed into a naïve Russianism not being really aware that, as he tells me, "in English you have to listen *to* something." First, it is Mr. Wilson who is not aware of the fact that there exists an analogous construction in Russian, *prislushivat'sya k zvuku*, "to listen closely to the sound"—which, of course, makes nonsense of the exclusive Russianism imagined by him and secondly, had he happened to leaf through a certain canto of *Don Juan*, written in the year Pushkin was beginning his poem, or a certain *Ode to Memory*, written when

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Pushkin's poem was being finished, my learned friend would have concluded that Byron ("Listening debates not very wise or witty") and Tennyson ("Listening the lordly music") must have had quite as much Russian blood as Pushkin and I.

In the mazurka of Canto Five one of the dancers "leads Tatiana with Olga" (*podvyol Tat'yanu s Ol'goy*) towards Onegin. This has little to do with the idiomatic *mī s ney* (which is lexically "we with her," but may mean "she and I") that Mr. Wilson mentions. Actually, in order to cram both girls into the first three feet of Five: XLIV: 3, Pushkin allowed himself a minor solecism. The construction *podvyol Tat'yanu i Ol'gu* would have been better Russian (just as "Tatiana and Olga" would have been better English), but it would not have scanned. Now Mr. Wilson should note carefully that this unfortunate *Tat'yanu s Ol'goy* has an additional repercussion: it clashes unpleasantly with the next line where the associative form is compulsory: *Onegin s Ol'goyu poshyol,* "Onegin goes with Olga."

Throughout my translation I remain a thousand times more faithful to Pushkin's Russian than to Wilson's English and therefore in these passages I did not hesitate to reproduce both the solecism and the ensuing clash.

"THE HANDLING of French is peculiar," grimly observes Mr. Wilson, and adduces three instances:

"The name of Rousseau's heroine is," he affirms, "given on one page as Julie and on the next as Julia." This is an absurd cavil since she is named Julie, all the thirteen times she is mentioned in the course of the four-page note referring to her (the note to Three: IX: 7), as well as numerous times elsewhere (see Index); but maybe Mr. Wilson has confused her with Augustus' or Byron's girl (see Index again).

The second "peculiar" example refers to the word *monde* in the world-of-fashion sense copiously described in my note to One: V: 8 (*le monde, le beau monde, le grand monde*). According to Mr. Wilson it should always appear with its "*le*" in the translation of the poem. This is an inept practice, of course (advocated mainly by those who, like Mr. Wilson, are insecure and self-conscious in their use of *le* and *la*) and would have resulted in saying "*le* noisy *monde*" instead of "the noisy *monde*" (Eight: XXXIV: 12). English writers of the 18th and 19th century wrote "the *monde*," not "*le monde*." I am sure that if Mr. Wilson consults the OED, which I do not have here, he will find examples from Walpole, Byron, Thackeray and others. What was good enough for them is good enough for Pushkin and me.

Finally, in this peculiar group of peculiar French there is the word *sauvage*, which according to Mr. Wilson should not have appeared in my rendering of Two: XXV: 5, *dika, pechal'na, molchaliva*, "*sauvage*, sad, silent"; but apart from the fact that it has no exact English equivalent, I chose this signal word to warn readers that Pushkin was using *dika* not simply in the sense of "wild" or "unsociable" but in a Gallic sense as a translation of "*sauvage*." Incidentally, it often occurs in English novels of the time along with *monde* and *ennui*.

"AS FOR THE CLASSICS," says Mr. Wilson, "Zoilus should be Zoïlus and Eol, Aeolus." But the diacritical sign is quite superfluous in the first case (see, for instance, Webster) and "Eol" is a poetical abbreviation constantly cropping up in English poetry. Moreover, Mr. Wilson can find the full form in my Index. I am unable to prevent my own Zoilus from imitating a bright and saucy schoolboy, but really he should not tell me how to spell the plural of "automaton" which has two endings, both correct. And what business does he have to rebuke me for preferring Theocritus to Virgil and to insinuate that I have read neither?

THERE IS ALSO the strange case of "stuss." "What does N. mean," queries Mr. Wilson, "when he speaks of Pushkin's addiction to stuss? This is not an English word and if he means the Hebrew word for nonsense which has been absorbed into German, it ought to be italicised and capitalised. But even on this assumption it hardly makes sense." This is Mr. Wilson's nonsense, not mine. "Stuss" is the English name of a card game which I discuss at length in my notes on Pushkin's addiction to gambling. Mr. Wilson should really consult *some* of my notes (and Webster's dictionary).

Then there is Mr. Nabokov's style. My style may be all Mr. Wilson says, clumsy, banal, etc. But in regard to the examples he gives it is not *unnecessarily* clumsy, banal, etc. If in translating *toska lyubvi Tat'yanu gonit* (Three: XVI: 1), "the ache of love chases Tatiana" (not "the ache of loss," as Mr. Wilson nonsensically misquotes), I put "chases" instead of the "pursues" that Mr. Wilson has the temerity to propose, I do so not only because "pursues" is in Russian not *gonit* but *presleduet*, but also because, as Mr. Wilson has not noticed, it would be a misleading repetition of the "pursue" used in the preceding stanza (*tebya presleduyut mechti*, "daydreams pursue you"), and my method is to repeat a term at close range only when Pushkin repeats it.

When the nurse says to Tatiana *nu delo, delo, ne gnevaysya, dusha moya*, and I render it by "this now makes sense, do not be cross with me, my soul," Mr. Wilson in a tone of voice remindful of some 17th-century French pedant discoursing on high and low style, declares that "make sense" and "my soul" do not go together, as if he knew which terms in the nurse's Russian go together or do not!

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As I HAVE ALREADY SAID, many of the recurring words I use (ache, pal, mollitude, and so on) are what I call "signal words," *i.e.*, terms meant, among other things, to indicate the recurrence of the corresponding Russian word. Style, indeed! It is correct information I wish to give and not samples of "correct style." I translate *ochen' milo postupil . . . nash priyatel'* in the beginning of Four: XVIII (which is also the beginning of the least artistic section in Four: XVIII–XXII) by "very nicely did our pal act," and this Mr. Wilson finds "vulgarly phrased"; but Mr. Wilson stomps in where I barely dare to tread because he is quite unaware that the corresponding Russian phrase is also trite and trivial. There simply exists no other way of rendering that genteel *ochen' milo* (Pushkin is imitating here a simpering reader), and if I chose here and elsewhere the signal word "pal" to render the colloquial turn of *priyatel'*, it is because there exists no other way of expressing it. "Pal" retains the unpleasant flippancy of *priyatel'* as used here, besides reproducing its first and last letters. *Priyatel' Vil'son* would be, for instance, a flippant and nasty phrase, out of place in a serious polemical text. Or does Mr. Wilson really think that the passage in question is better rendered by Professor Arndt? ("My reader, can you help bestowing praise on Eugene for the fine part he played with stricken Tanya?")

Mr. Wilson's last example in the series pertaining to "bad style" has to do with the end of Seven: XXXII. When rendering the elegiac terms in which Tatiana takes leave of her country home, I had to take into account their resemblance to the diction of Pushkin's youthful elegy addressed to a beloved country place (Farewell, ye faithful coppices, etc.), and also to that of Lenski's last poem. It was a question of adjustment and alignment. This is why I have Tatiana say in a stilted and old-fashioned idiom, "Farewell, pacific sites, farewell, secluded (note the old-fashioned pronunciation of the corresponding *uedinenniy*) refuge! Shall I see you?" "Such passages," says Mr. Wilson, "sound like the products of those computers which are supposed to translate Russian into English." But since those computers are fed only the basic Russian Mr. Wilson has mastered, and are directed by anthropologists and progressive linguists, the results would be *his* comic versions, and not my clumsy but literal translation.

PROBABLY THE MOST rollicking part of Mr. Wilson's animadversions is the one in which he offers his own mistranslation as the perfection I should have tried to emulate.

My rendering of *gusey kriklivih karavan tyanulsya k yugu* (Four: XLI: 11 and beginning of 12) is "the caravan of clamorous geese was tending southward" but, as I note in my commentary, *kriklivih* is lexically "screamy" and the idiomatic *tyanulsya* conveys a very special blend of meaning, with the sense of "progressing in a given direction" predominating over the simple "stretching" obtainable from pocket-dictionaries (see also note to Seven: IV: 14). Mr. Wilson thinks that in his own version of the coming of winter in Four, part of which I quote in my Commentary with charitably italicised errors, he is "almost literally accurate and a good deal more poetically vivid than Nabokov." The "almost" is very lenient since "loud-tongued geese" is much too lyrical and "stretching" fails to bring out the main element of the contextual *tyanulsya*.

A still funnier sight is Mr. Wilson trying to show me how to translate properly *ego loshadka, sneg pochuya, pletyotsya rīs'yu kak nibud'* (Five: II: 3–4) which in my literal rendering is "his naggy, having sensed the snow, shambles at something like a trot." Mr. Wilson's own effort, which goes "his poor (?) horse, sniffing (?) the snow, attempting (?) a trot, plods (?) through it (?)," besides being a medley of gross mistranslations, is an example of careless English. If, however, we resist the unfair temptation of imagining Mr. Wilson's horse plodding through my trot and have it plod through Mr. Wilson's snow, we obtain the inept picture of an unfortunate beast of burden laboriously working its way through that snow, whereas in reality Pushkin celebrates relief, not exertions. The peasant is not "rejoicing" or "feeling festive," as paraphrasts have it (not knowing Pushkin's use of *torzhestvovat'* here and elsewhere), but celebrating the coming of winter, since the snow under the sleigh facilitates the little nag's progress and is especially welcome after a long snowless autumn of muddy ruts and reluctant cartwheels.

Although Mr. Wilson finds my Commentary overdone, he cannot help suggesting three additions. In a ludicrous display of pseudo-scholarship he insinuates that I "seem to think" (I do not, and never did) that the application by the French of the word "goddams" to the English (which I do not even discuss) begins in the 18th century. He would like me to say that it goes back to the 15th century. Why should I? Because he looked it up?

He also would have liked me to mention in connection with the "pensive vampire" (Three: XII: 8) of Polidori's novelette (1819) another variety of vampire which Pushkin alluded to in a poem of 1834 suggested by Mérimée's well-known pastiche. But *that* vampire is the much coarser *vurdalak*, a lowly graveyard ghoul having nothing to do with the romantic allusion in Canto Three (1824); besides he appeared ten years later (and three years after Pushkin had finished *Eugene Onegin*)—quite outside the period limiting my interest in vampires.

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The most sophisticated suggestion, however, volunteered by Mr. Wilson, concerns the evolution of the adjective *krasnïy* which "means both red and beautiful." May this not be influenced "by the custom in Old Russia, described in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, of the peasant women's painting large red spots on their cheeks in order to beautify themselves?" This is a preposterous gloss, somehow reminding one of Freud's explaining a patient's passion for young women by the fact that the poor fellow in his self-abusing boyhood used to admire Mt. Jungfrau from the window of a water closet.

I SHALL NOT SAY much about the paragraph that Mr. Wilson devotes to my notes on prosody. It is simply not worth while. He has skimmed my "tedious and interminable appendix" and has not understood what he managed to glean. From our conversations and correspondence in former years I well know that, like Onegin, he is incapable of comprehending the mechanism of verse—either Russian or English. This being so, he should have refrained from "criticising" my essay on the subject. With one poke of his stubby pencil he reintroduces the wretched old muddle I take such pains to clear up and fussily puts back the "secondary accents" and "spondees" where I show they do not belong. He makes no attempt to assimilate my terminology, he obstinately ignores the similarities and distinctions I discuss, and indeed I cannot believe he has read more than a few lines of the thing.

My "most serious failure," according to Mr. Wilson, "is one of interpretation." Had he read my commentary with more attention he would have seen that I do not believe in *any* kind of "interpretation" so that his or my "interpretation" can be neither a failure nor a success. In other words, I do not believe in the old-fashioned, naïve, and musty method of human-interest criticism championed by Mr. Wilson that consists of removing the characters from an author's imaginary world to the imaginary, but generally far less plausible, world of the critic who then proceeds to examine these displaced characters as if they were "real people." In my commentary I have given examples and made some innocent fun of such criticism (steering clear, however, from any allusion to Mr. Wilson's extraordinary misconceptions in *The Triple Thinkers*).

I have also demonstrated the factual effect of Pushkin's characterisations as related to the structure of the poem. There are certain inconsistencies in his treatment of his hero which are especially evident, and in a way especially attractive, in the beginning of Canto Six. In a note to Six: XXVIII: 7, I stress the uncanny, dreamlike quality of Onegin's behaviour just before and during the duel. It is purely a question of architectonics—not of personal interpretation. My facts are objective and irrefutable. I remain with Pushkin in Pushkin's world. I am not concerned with Onegin's being gentle or cruel, energetic or indolent, kind or unkind ("you are simply very kind-hearted," says a woman to him quoted in his diary; he is "*zloy*, unkind," says Mr. Wilson); I am concerned only with Pushkin's overlooking, in the interest of the plot, that Onegin, who according to Pushkin is a punctilious *homme du monde* and an experienced duellist, would hardly choose a servant for second or shoot to kill in the kind of humdrum affair where vanity is amply satisfied by sustaining one's adversary's fire without returning it.

The actual cause of the encounter is however quite plausible in Pushkin: upon finding himself at a huge vulgar feast (Five: XXXI) so unlike the informal party promised him by Lenski (Four: XLIX), Onegin is quite right to be furious with his deceitful or scatterbrained young friend, just as Lenski is quite justified in calling him out for flirting with Olga. Onegin accepts the challenge instead of laughing it off as he would have done if Lenski had chosen a less pedantic second. Pushkin stresses the fact that Onegin "sincerely loves the youth" but that *amour propre* is sometimes stronger than friendship. That is all. One should stick to that and not try to think up "deep" variations which are not even new; for what Mr. Wilson inflicts upon me, in teaching me how to understand Onegin, is the old solemn nonsense of Onegin's hating and envying Lenski for being capable of idealism, devoted love, ecstatic German romanticism and the like "when he himself is so sterile and empty." Actually, it is just as easy, and just as irrelevant (yet more fashionable—Mr. Wilson is behind the times), to argue that Onegin, not Lenski, is the true idealist, that he loathes Lenski because he perceives in him the future fat swinish squire Lenski is doomed to become, and so he raises slowly his pistol and... but Lenski in malignant cold blood is also raising his pistol, and God knows who would have killed whom had not the author followed wisely the old rule of sparing one's more interesting character while the novel is still developing. If anybody takes "a mean advantage," as Mr. Wilson absurdly puts it (none of the principals can derive any special "advantage" in a *duel à volonté*), it is not Onegin, but Pushkin.

So much for my "most serious failure."

ALL THAT NOW REMAINS to be examined is Mr. Wilson's concern for reputations—Pushkin's reputation as a linguist and the reputations of Sainte-Beuve and others as writers.

With an intensity of feeling that he shares with Russian monolinguists who have debated the subject, Mr. Wilson scolds me for under-

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rating Pushkin's knowledge of English and "quite disregarding the evidence." I supply the evidence, not Mr. Wilson, not Sidorov, and not even Pushkin's own father (a cocky old party who maintained that his son used to speak fluent Spanish, let alone English). Had Mr. Wilson carefully consulted my notes to One: XXXVIII: 9, he would have convinced himself that I prove with absolute certainty that neither in 1821, nor 1833, nor 1836, was Pushkin able to understand simple English phrases. My demonstration remains unassailable, and it is this evidence that Mr. Wilson disregards while referring me to stale generalities or to an idiotic anecdote about the Raevski girls' teaching Pushkin English in a Crimean bower. Mr. Wilson knows nothing about the question. He is not even aware that Pushkin got the style of his "Byronic" tales from Pichot and Zhukovski, or that Pushkin's copying out extracts from foreign writers means nothing. Mr. Wilson, too, may have copied extracts, and we see the results. He complains I do not want to admit that Pushkin's competence in language was considerable, but I can only reply that Mr. Wilson's notion of such competence and my notion of it are completely dissimilar. I realise, of course, that my friend has a vested interest in the matter, but I can assure him that Pushkin spoke excellent 18th-century French, but had only a gentleman's smattering of other foreign languages.

Finally—Mr. Wilson is horrified by my "instinct to take digs at great reputations." Well, it cannot be helped; Mr. Wilson must accept my instinct, and wait for the next crash. I refuse to be guided and controlled by a communion of established views and academic traditions, as he wants me to be. What right has he to prevent me from finding mediocre and over-rated people like Balzac, Dostoevsky, Sainte-Beuve, or Stendhal, that pet of all those who like their French plain? How much has Mr. Wilson enjoyed Mme de Staël's novels? Has he ever studied Balzac's absurdities and Stendhal's *clichés*? Has he examined the melodramatic muddle and phony mysticism of Dostoevsky? Can he really venerate that arch-vulgarian, Sainte-Beuve? And why should I be forbidden to consider that Chaykovski's hideous and insulting libretto is not saved by a music whose cloying banalities have pursued me ever since I was a curly-haired boy in a velvet box? If I am allowed to display my very special and very subjective admiration for Pushkin, Browning, Krílov, Chateaubriand, Griboedov, Senancour, Küchelbecker, Keats, Hodasevich, to name only a few of those I praise in my notes, I should be also allowed to bolster and circumscribe that praise by pointing out to the reader my favourite bogeys and shams in the hall of false fame.

In his rejoinder to my letter of 26 August 1965, in the *NYR*, Mr. Wilson says that on rereading his article he felt it sounded "more damaging" than he had meant it to be. His article, entirely consisting, as I have shown, of quibbles and blunders, can be damaging only to his own reputation—and that is the last look I shall ever take at the dismal scene.

Vladimir Nabokov

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LETTERS

Kipling's Logic

I WOULD LIKE to suggest that Mr. John Bayley is writing without a due sense of changed attitude when, in his article, "The Kipling Conundrum" [ENCOUNTER, December], he asks:

> Why, after all, is it wrong for the Boers to treat English *uitlanders* as an inferior class, and right for the English to do the same in India to natives and Eurasians?

From my recollection of adults' conversations overheard when I was a child, I can affirm that Kipling's attitude was perfectly logical. The English had, to his mind, a right to treat the natives of India and the Eurasians as inferiors, because the English were using their inventions and discoveries in the fields of science and technology to exploit the natural resources of India, which the natives and the Eurasians had not done and seemed incapable of doing. The *uitlanders* were Europeans who came out to the Transvaal to use their scientific and technological knowledge to exploit the natural resources of the country, which the Boers could not do, and indeed did not wish to do, as they believed in an agricultural state. Therefore the *uitlanders* had a right to despise the Boers, but the Boers had no right to despise the *uitlanders*.

The last time I heard a similar point of view expressed with Kiplingesque vigour was in a Communist paper regarding the Five-Year-Plan and Post-Five-Year-Plans and Post-Post-Five-Year-Plans, published some time in the early 'thirties, which suggested very clearly that the world belonged to such groups, or rather such a group, as would exploit its potentialities, and not to the various groups which occupy sections of it. I remember thinking that Kipling would have been sympathetic.

Kipling felt, and was not alone in thinking, that the British and the Germans, both masters of modern science and technology, should have been covering the world with useful works such as dams and railways, and it was treachery of the Germans to have abandoned this ideal and turned round and attacked their fore-ordained co-workers. And that, I think, is why he thought it, as Mr. Bayley puts it, "right for our airmen to drop bombs on Germans and wrong for the Germans to do the same to us."

If Kipling often appears inconsistent, it is not so much that his sense of logic was defective as that he wrote at a period when men put absolute faith in assumptions which were about not simply to be disproved but to disappear; and he took for granted that they would be shared by all his readers for ever.

REBECCA WEST

Ibstone House, Ibstone,
near High Wycombe, Bucks.

Ford Madox Ford

IT IS CERTAINLY right [Tony Tanner's "Ford Madox Ford: A Saint of Literature," ENCOUNTER, November] that the British literary public should give some attention to "poor Fordie," whom it practically ignored ever after the great *English Review* collapsed into the philistine arms of Austin Harrison; but canonisation is going a bit far. Ford was a passionate literature-lover—*homme de lettres* was his favourite description of himself. He was also deeply interested in the technique of writing at a time when hardly anyone else in England was; and he was an eager patron of younger writers even when he had nothing but benevolent words to offer them.

All true, and adding up to a good deal. Furthermore, he had some very bad luck, taking, as Ezra Pound said, "more punishment than any man I have known." Here, however, we strike the flaw. For so much of the "punishment" was of his own deliberate making. I am not speaking—or not much—of his astounding incompetence in business (including farming!) and in his own personal affairs, though that is well known and could be most exasperating; nor of such ill-timing as produced the Tietjens saga, for example, exactly in the years when English interest in the European war was at its lowest ebb; nor even of his remarkable disregard for fact when writing history, reminiscence, or criticism. These *may* all be regarded, as he regarded them himself, as unimportances which beset an *homme de lettres* in this age. What I mean is a determined romantic masochism which goes right into the heart of his work—even the best.

Take only the Tietjens stories. Tietjens is Ford's hero—nearly if not quite Ford's idea of himself—and see what an incredible collection of humiliations his creator heaps upon him. He is cuckolded by a monstrous bitch, who steals his money while he is in France and who kills his father by falsely accusing her husband of adultery. His old friend cheats him; his Army superiors, including the top brass, regularly frustrate him; he has a soldier, to whom he has refused leave, wounded and bleeding to death all over him. *Etc.* All this, as an English landed gentleman (with, incidentally, a lot of money awaiting him in Middlesbrough coal or iron) and an English Time-was Tory, he endures in perfect stiff-lipped silence—a "grey mealsack of a man," Ford calls him. But this noble mealsack does not, in fact, remotely resemble an English Tory country gentleman of the Edwardian age; he is, as V. S. Pritchett devastatingly pointed out, a romantic German Idea of an English country gentleman. How Ford, the passionate devotee of France, would have raged at the description! Nevertheless, it is true, and I cannot see how anyone can fail to see the essential unreality of the picture, which is paralleled by that of the heroes of so many lesser—though still so readable—of Ford's books. And the same sentimentality can be found in the text and form of his actual writing, from which I have no space to quote.

N.B. This does not—repeat not—mean that he should not be read. Try the *March of Literature*,

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which kept me reading all night when it first came out.

MARGARET COLE

London

THE "canonising" title (*A Saint of Literature*) was not, in fact, my choice; but still, I would rather be rebuked for excessive praise than detected in any unjust denigration. "Romantic masochist"?—certainly, and like many other serious writers he explored his malady in his work. Alas, I lack the authority to speak about country gentlemen of the Edwardian, or indeed any other, age. But verisimilitude is not in question. Like the characters in many great novels, Tietjens came out of his creator's imagination. Certainly, if you are looking for documentary realism the portrait might strike you with its "essential unreality," but there are more realisms than the one based on accuracy of contemporary notation. For me it has the "reality" of an authentic vision memorably projected. I would not argue with the case that it tells us more about the author than it does about England—the same turns out to be true of a good deal of greater writing than Ford's. However, as long as Mrs. Cole agrees he should be read, we won't quarrel.

I would like to say here that Dame Rebecca West was kind enough to write to me explaining that the unfortunate fate of the *English Review* was rather more complex than I suggested, and its demise was as much due to some intricate personal relationships as a general prejudice against Ford. Dame Rebecca testifies that Ford could incite "enormous animosity and even baseness in other people"; but she also stresses that "to those who knew him his faults did not really count compared with his virtues." It would be out of place for me, with no personal knowledge of Ford, to speculate about his private character. My only point really, was that he remains under-rated as a writer and under-appreciated as a devoted and selfless servant of literature.

TONY TANNER

King's College,
Cambridge

Edwin Muir

MAY I, as the person mainly responsible for selecting the Edwin Muir letters which appeared in the January ENCOUNTER, draw attention to an unfortunate printer's error in the first column on page 8, lines 27–33? The passage should have read:

> "Lear was not destroyed by a cunning fox, a man of the world, but by the ruthless she-wolves, his daughters, almost as great as himself. Antony was destroyed by a fault in his own character, or by the single passion which ate up all the others, leaving him defenceless. Hamlet . . . etc."

J. C. HALL

London

"Beyond African Dictatorship"?

IT WOULD BE difficult to disagree with Professor Arthur Lewis' contention [ENCOUNTER, August] that in many African countries free political discussion has been curbed since independence and that political participation by the mass of the voters has narrowed. The nationalist parties which took over the reins of government have become so enshrined in the seats of power that little real choice is left to the voters even where the formality of elections is maintained.

He attributes these departures from the recognised standards of western democracy to the presence of the single-party structure which has become prevalent throughout Africa. Such a party, he argues, cannot be representative of all the people, nor can it maintain stability. The operative word is "cannot." The arguments he advances do not prove the case that there is any inherent reason why a single party cannot provide free discussion or political stability. In fact, Professor Lewis points out that in Tanzania there has been continued stability under the single party; he might well have added a second example, Tunisia.

To lay the blame for the absence of a Western-style multi-party system in Africa today on the single-party system is to pass over the real cause for the direction taken in African politics over the past five years. It is not the single party but the personalisation of power within the party which helps to sow the seeds of instability. Popular participation in the decision-making process of government, hailed with such enthusiasm at independence, failed to develop and for it has been substituted a concentration of power in the hands of a single individual. Where this power has been arbitrarily used without consultation with at least the major strands of opinion within the party, the stability of the régime has been seriously affected.

The existence of a single party does not mean the complete suppression of opposing viewpoints any more than the existence of multiple parties guarantees the free expression of opinion. Within the single party in many African countries conflicting groups may have an important effect on party action, as the detailed study of the convolutions of policy in Ghana easily demonstrates. Conflicts of this nature do not, however, involve the mass of the voters since they are frequently the product of sophisticated ideological differences among members of the younger educated party *élite*.

Professor Lewis argues that, since Africans are no different from "other peoples" (by which he appears to mean exclusively Europeans and North Americans), they should adopt a variant of the system of multi-party democracy common in the West. But the fact is that Africans *are* different from Europeans and North Americans by the very fact of being Africans; there is no reason to assume that a system which the West has found to be compatible with its own cultural environment should necessarily be replicated in Africa. To insist that the cultural differences between Africa and Europe are so slight that they do not warrant the evolution of a particular political system for African

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countries is to push the classic French colonial argument of assimilation *à outrance*.

THE NEW AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS have paid primary attention to politics, frequently at the expense of time which might perhaps better have been devoted to economic planning. But to label President Nkrumah's dictum "*seek ye first the political kingdom*" as an "adolescent approach to politics" is to take the phrase out of the context of pre-independence nationalist politics. For the African leaders the political kingdom was, and is, all important; had they not seized it first, independence could not have been won. Admittedly it could not be argued that, so far, "*all else has been added unto it*" but without it nothing else could have been undertaken.

The prescription advanced to cure the evils of the single-party system is the development of a multi-party coalition form of government which, it is claimed, will be better able to represent tribal or sectional interests. Although it is quite possible that the present single parties will break up under the pressures generated by diverse interest groups, as Professor Lewis suggests, is there any reason to believe that this process will necessarily lead to coalition? To maintain a coalition all parties must agree upon a common policy. If one important member of the coalition fails to maintain the united front on a particular issue, the coalition falls. Under these circumstances the threat of instability would appear to be much more omnipotent than under the single-party system. With the possibility of governmental collapse always just around the corner, the tendency would be for the stronger parties to merge into a single front which through its combined strength would be able to maintain itself in power. Nor would a coalition government seem to decrease the thirst for power and reward among the ministers which Professor Lewis justly condemns; on the contrary it would appear that the prospect of an even more temporary hold on a ministerial post under a coalition structure might have just the reverse effect.

ULTIMATELY stability and democracy in Africa depend not on single or multiple parties, but on the creation of an overall consensus within the national community on the rules of the political game. Neither coalition, proportional representation, nor any other constitutional or electoral device can produce democracy so long as there is no common agreement on the basic goals of the national government. If the opposing forces arising among the socially mobilised elements of the population are not in some degree conciliated, the already thin fabric of national unity may be torn apart at any time (as the case of the recent Nigerian elections illustrates). A coalition government in Lagos only barely succeeds in holding the country together, even though the parties concerned were on the surface representative of tribal and regional interests. The parties failed not so much to satisfy tribal interests but to resolve the conflicts created among the groups most directly affected by the process of modernisation. That these conflicts took the public form of competing tribal allegiances should not obscure the fact that the underlying stresses stemmed from the varying rates of economic development within the regions of the federation. A coalition of regionally based parties is not the answer to what is essentially a national problem.

In the United States, decades were required after independence to achieve a basic consensus. Indeed, it is arguable that it has not yet been fully gained. In his impatience to create a reasonable facsimile of the Western political process in Africa, Professor Lewis leaves out this essential ingredient of democracy.

To attack the one-party system as the primary cause of the failure of popular representative government in Africa is to mistake a symptom for the disease itself.

L. GRAY COWAN
Columbia University, New York City

Olivia Manning

MAY I endorse Mr. P. N. Furbank's statement, reviewing *Friends and Heroes* [ENCOUNTER, December], that he is "blind to something in Olivia Manning's novels, some concealed asperity or design, which others enjoy." *The Great Fortune, The Spoilt City*, and *Friends and Heroes* form a beautiful, intricate, and subtle pattern, not obvious to anyone who like your reviewer has read only the first volume and the last.

Tolstoy in *War and Peace* failed to wed his personal and historic stories. In her Balkan trilogy Miss Manning has brilliantly succeeded. How to combine the history of the collapse of Europe under Nazi pressure with the story of the marriage of Guy and Harriet Pringle in the first two years of the late war appeared a technical impossibility. But Miss Manning has achieved this by taking a group of characters, mainly expatriate, first in Bucharest and later in Athens, and reflecting the larger events in their thoughts, actions, and reactions. History is thus caught within the compass of their mirrors, which, since the characters are typically diverse, present conflicting facets. The design of the trilogy is funnel-shaped, so that by the final volume everything is seen in terms of Harriet Pringle's consciousness, though the characters preserve their symbolic value.

The characters appear so natural, the minutiae of observation so artless, that a reader of limited sensibility may miss their symbolic, general significance. Mr. Furbank likens Prince Yaki to Billy Bunter because this symbol of the *ancien régime* in the final volume, after a career as comically ebullient as Falstaff's, is cut down to a size as short and narrow as the coffin. His death (*F. & H.*, pp. 331–2) and the survival of Tandy, the fur-coated newspaperman symbol of the future, is one of the most moving and resonant passages not merely in modern, but in all, literature.

Your correspondents are unfortunately more limited for space than your reviewers. But those less blind than Mr. Furbank recognise Miss Manning's trilogy as a masterpiece, on its surface simply beguiling, re-echoing in its depths.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL
Twickenham, Middlesex

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Paris

THE *modern novel has been in a serious crisis ever since James Joyce's monumental effort to narrate a day in the life of Léon Blum.*

LE FIGARO

Cambridge

A RECIPE *for successful publishing? The three certainly successful themes, so I have been told [writes Denis Brogan] are the Civil War, doctors, and dogs. So the ideal best-seller would be* I Was Lincoln's Vet. THE GUARDIAN

Los Angeles

POLICE *have charged a college student with killing two men after reading a novel by the late French author Albert Camus.*

Wayne Welch, 18, a first-year philosophy student at Cerritos Junior College, had found an account of the slaying of a man by a rifleman on a lonely beach and of the slayer's guilty feelings afterwards in The Outsider, *police said. The novel was required reading for one of Welch's college courses. Police quoted Welch as saying he did not know the victims, both in their fifties and employees of the trucking firm for which Welch worked part-time to help pay college expenses. Police said Welch had selected them at random to try out the slaying depicted in the novel.* JOURNAL DE GENÈVE

New York

THE FILM VERSION *of the James Joyce novel* Finnegans Wake *will be shown in America with English subtitles, though the dialogue is in English. Miss Mary Ellen Bute, producer and director, said today that subtitles would "enhance the beauty of the film's poetry and point to the humour of the elaborate plays on words." The film, made in Dublin and New York, is based on Mary Manning's play of the Joyce classic.*

NEW YORK TIMES

London

THE FAVOURITE AUTHORS *of 2,300 people approached in a recent survey were Fleming I. (mentioned by 219 people), Christie A. (157), Shute N. (104), and Dickens C. (98). Austen J. came ninth on the list (93), just above Wodehouse P. G. (49). Haggard R. had 31 and Eliot T. S. 25. Bernard Shaw (27) would not have been pleased to know that he was mentioned by the same number of people as Dell E. M. Few could name any best selling books published in the last year. The survey found that reviews in papers and periodicals, as well as serialisation in newspapers, had little effect on buying habits.*

THE GUARDIAN

London

A RECORDING *of modern logical philosophy set to music went on sale here yesterday. British composer Elisabeth Lutyens, in her "Motet Opus 27," has put to music Ludwig Wittgenstein's difficult and abstruse* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. *It is sung,* a cappella *and in German by the John Alldis Choir and was sponsored by the British Council, a government body, which will get its money back if and when enough records are sold.*

Mr. Wittgenstein, who died in 1951, came from Vienna to Cambridge University before World War I to discuss logic with Bertrand Russell. NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

Bonn

DR. ADENAUER, *when asked about his recent reading, replied that he had again re-read Rudyard Kipling's* The Light that Failed. *The retired Chancellor was looking suddenly very ancient, almost of biblical age, or a bit like one of those lonely old captains of Joseph Conrad, another favourite author of his. "But listen," he said, "I want to tell you something that I've never told before. It was the year 1917 and I had a serious automobile accident. For many weeks there was the danger that I would go blind. My doctors tried to console me that those who were blind were better off than the deaf. At any rate, that was the time my devotion to Rudyard Kipling's novel began...."*

DIE WELT AM SONNTAG

London

A NOVEL *submitted by a former Dartmoor prisoner which won the Arthur Koestler literary award for 1963 was almost entirely copied from an American paperback. The Koestler award was founded in 1962 to encourage creative work by prisoners. Mr. Koestler, himself a political prisoner in Spain in the 'thirties, wanted to offset the mental stagnation of prison life.*

The novel, Young and Sensitive, *was published by Hutchinsons in September last year. The first edition of 3,000 has been almost entirely sold, but Hutchinsons are not printing another edition and plans for a Penguin edition as well as foreign translations have been cancelled. Mr. Robert Lusty, managing director of Hutchinsons, said yesterday: "We regret this occurrence because the award is a good idea. This might give ammunition to people who say it is weakness to make any concession to prisoners...."* DAILY TELEGRAPH

Rome

WITH *the title, "The Bible," still under scrutiny, John Huston has asked his film executive colleagues to consider showing his picture with* only *the title, and without any credits, directorial or otherwise, listed on the screen either at the start or at the end of the movie. His non-executive colleagues have already given him a strong endorsement of this idea. One Italian colleague, as a matter of fact, gave Huston a big Italian hug upon hearing about it, and pointed upward, saying, "Let people think* HE *made the picture."* THE NEW YORKER

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Off the Ball

or, Churchill Ill-considered — By KENNETH YOUNG

IT OFTEN HAPPENS that after the death of a great man his reputation goes into a decline. He who had received bouquets while alive receives brickbats during the early part of his eternal absence. It is a kind of redress, a balancing up, that human beings after dispensing their favours to the lucky one seem to impose. The process is probably salutary. No reputation ought to be immune from criticism and eventual reassessment; and, on another level, when the Master has left the class-room it is natural for the long-inhibited schoolboy to draw rude caricatures of him on the blackboard.

But if it is to have any effect the caricature must be recognisable. If the subject had a largish nose, the caricature must show him with an enormous nose; it is pointless to remove his nose altogether which is what, metaphorically speaking, Mr. Goronwy Rees did in his article on Winston Churchill [ENCOUNTER, November]. "After the Ball Was Over" he called it; "Off the Ball" more accurately describes it. Quite apart from straightforward errors of fact and opinions dressed up as facts which I shall briefly detail, Mr. Rees hoists himself with his own petard. He writes of the hyperbole and extravagance of the language used to describe Churchill at the time of his death ten months ago—and himself uses equally hyperbolic, extravagant and misleadingly emotive language. *Was* there any "collective hysteria" in the week following Churchill's death? Was there, as he suggests, anything remotely comparable between Churchill's State Funeral and what Mr. Rees elegantly refers to as "Valentino's wake"? By such exaggerations is Mr. Rees undone before he starts, as he is by certain assumptions, common to the "liberal," "progressive" mentality such as that a brave man, whether in war or peace, is somehow abnormal and therefore reprehensible, or—more insidiously—that "1940 was perhaps the last time that Britain would ever exercise an independent and decisive role in world affairs." How on earth does Mr. Rees know and if he doesn't know what are his motives in suggesting it? Similar talk, so common in the 1930s, helped to convince Hitler that Britain would "fold" as easily as France. Somehow the Reeses of this world will never learn that while the British may be a stupid race they are not craven—and that it is not a disgrace not to be.

KENNETH YOUNG *was until recently the Editor of the* Yorkshire Post *and is now Political and Literary adviser to the Beaverbrook Group of Newspapers. He is the author of a biography of Arthur J. Balfour (1963).*

Inaccuracies of this kind are paralleled by inaccuracies—or let us be kind and call it ignorance—of fact. Churchill, he tells us, "until the second World War never won the love or trust" of the British people. Churchill had both the love and trust of millions of Britions in 1914–15 when he was First Lord of the Admiralty and, as far as naval ratings were concerned, that continued throughout the war, despite the Dardanelles. Speaking of the Dardanelles, it is not true that Mr. Robert Rhodes James in his recent book reminds us that "Churchill must take a large part of the blame for that disaster, both in its planning and its execution." No one except Mr. Rees thought that the book suggested any such thing; and the author himself has affirmed to me that he neither believes it nor is aware that any such construction can be placed on any conclusion he reached in his book.

Nor has he got the story of Churchill's becoming premier in 1940 quite right. It did not happen simply "because Halifax was unwilling to undertake the burden." If Mr. Rees does not care for Churchill's own account of it, he might consult Lord Birkenhead's biography of Halifax. It is not true, again, that Churchill's "incessant bullying of his military advisers" hindered rather than assisted the efficient conduct of the war. Churchill's method was often to take the opposite view to that of his Chiefs of Staff so as to make them think again, think deeply and clearly and to spur them to an aggressive rather than defensive attitude. It was a kind of dialogue, out of which a decision emerged. But there is no single major issue of war-making where there is any evidence that he overrode them. For instance he demanded raids here, raids there, and a Second Front in 1942. But not until the Chiefs of Staff agreed did he give the order.

YET MORE MISLEADING are some of Mr. Rees' statements of "fact" which are really only opinion masquerading as fact. Among these is the listing as one of Churchill's "gross errors" his policy of intervention in Russia at the end of the first World War. It was of course not Churchill's policy but that of the Allies, underwritten by the British Cabinet with Lloyd George as Prime Minister, and decided upon while Churchill was outside the Cabinet (he was Munitions Minister) and before he took over the War Office. Certainly he backed the policy, agreeing with the Allies that what was wanted was not to "bring back a Czar"—a Communist smear of the time—but to ensure that Russia's new Government was run by the Social Revolutionaries not by the anti-Allies Bolsheviks. Churchill believed that at the end of 1919 there was a good chance of beating the Bolsheviks had the Allies pursued their policy vigorously and had the border states been encouraged to combine. If the

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policy had been successful there would have been no wholesale slaughter of the Russian middle classes and *kulaks*, no 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact, no mad Stalin, and probably no Cold War. Why then was it a "gross error"—except in the minds of dedicated Communists?

Mr. Rees also tells us as a fact that Churchill was "absurdly wrong about the Abdication"—no doubt he would always think it absurd for a British subject to support his Sovereign faced by those seeking to oust him—and that among his closest friends were "such very unpleasant characters as Lords Birkenhead and Beaverbrook." (We are each of us no doubt "unpleasant" in somebody's eyes—even Mr. Rees—but he makes it sound as though these two Lords were universally regarded as unpleasant which is not so. What Mr. Rees means but disingenuously does not say is that he personally believes them to have been very unpleasant. How well did he know them?) Again, all he has to say about the Churchill government of 1951–55 is that it was "a singularly undistinguished administration." Undistinguished or not, it rescued Britain from the bankruptcy caused by two Socialist governments and set the country on the path to prosperity. It is easy now to forget how poor was the quality of life for ordinary Britons in 1951—six years after the war—and how rich it has become for millions since the middle-1950s.

One other thing Mr. Rees forgets and it is most germane to his main theme, that of Churchill and war. He quite properly points out that Churchill was never blind or insensitive to the cruelty and misery of war, that none of his policies was intended to provoke war, and that war having come he had no wish to wage it for its own sake. Nevertheless—and here Mr. Rees intends praise—he understood better than any of his contemporaries that war was "the ultimate reality of our time." Such a view, though according to Mr. Rees it was "intensely antipathetic to the spirit of the age," gives Churchill his claim to greatness as a statesman—that plus the fact that he had the courage to face and accept the consequences. One may wonder, glancing at European history over the last 1,000 years, when war *wasn't* the ultimate reality. Still, Mr. Rees is partly right about Churchill's realistic appraisal of the meaning of war up to 1945. What he omits is the radical change in Churchill's attitude after the war. He was one of the first to comprehend that the Bomb and its later over-kill developments had reversed the old concept that war was the continuation of diplomacy by other means, the ultimate reserve for the last emergency.

This is why during his last premiership he continually sought for some reconciliation with Russia despite the marked lack of enthusiasm on the part of his beloved United States. His greatest ambition in those years was to arrange a concert of the great powers to work out a lasting peace. This reality was the cause of his constant visits to Washington—and why, too, he the great war leader curtailed Britain's defence expenditure and refused to allow it even a "natural" rise. His "peace-mongering" was of course regarded by the Labour party as a stunt. He was not dismayed; there were plenty who called his warnings of danger from Hitler a stunt and refused to take firm steps in good time so that what he called the "unnecessary war" could have been avoided. He was not deflected in the 1930s or the 1950s from his course; and in the 1950s he knew that the whole conception of international politics that he had lived by for 70 years had been turned upside down and inside out. Now neither attack nor defence was realistic; both meant annihilation; as for deterrence it assumed a shared rationality among the atom powers which, had it existed, would have resulted in joint destruction of every nuclear weapon and their burial in mid-Atlantic. In brief there no longer existed any other means of continuing diplomacy; "jaw-jaw" had finally triumped over "waw-waw" as a means of policy.

Churchill's ambition to take part in a new concert of peace did not come about, though the groundwork he laid helped Macmillan to achieve the partial test-ban treaty. But the ambition is the salient point in Churchill's later development; it adds a new dimension to his career and, in my opinion, to his greatness. Yet Mr. Rees misses it completely.

Mr. Rees misses a great deal more which if he had really been "reconsidering" Churchill rather than blowing raspberries at him he could have found space for even in so brief an article. He ought to have made it clear—as he could have done in one sentence—that Churchill even at the height of power remained consciously a servant of the House of Commons; for example even during the vital conferences with Roosevelt during the war he took no major decision without consulting Attlee and the Cabinet. As the great battles raged, he was required to meet parliamentary votes of censure. He was indeed the servant of the House while using all his gifts to make himself its master.

Mr. Rees is right to intimate that there was more in the character and psychology of Churchill than met the public eye. He was no clockwork politician, all front and no back. I do not know about the "seasons of agonised brooding" that Mr. Rees, quoting Isaiah Berlin, mentions. But anyone who doubts the complex depths of Churchill might read the brilliant, revealing study of his novel, *Savrola*, that appeared in October's Encounter. Certainly when Churchill was disappointed he fell into depths of despair and, oddly, was then at his most charming as a human being, just as when he was cock-a-hoop he became elated and, as Beaverbrook wrote, had in him the stuff of which tyrants are made.

Mr. Rees tells us nothing of his subject's religion. No doubt in his "liberal progressive" way he would dismiss it as irrelevant. But it is never irrelevant with a man born in the Victorian era as Churchill was. I think on any count it is important to know that Churchill, born 1875, was not in the ordinary sense a religious man. In his early manhood, a subaltern reading voraciously, he had come down on the side of Darwin and Huxley rather than of Kingsley and Newman. He did not believe in life after death. But he was adamant in refusing to say or do anything which might deprive others of their faith.

Another thing. For a long time in his political

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career—probably up to the end of the first World War—he was somewhat naïve, tending to believe what his colleagues said and to be out-manoeuvred as a result. Caution and political shrewdness came late in life. This late development of a carapace rather than the electorate's mistrust suggested by Mr. Rees kept him out of power so long.

About Churchill's role in 1940–41, he himself said modestly that it was the British Lion itself that stirred and he was lucky enough to be its roar. But he was also the organiser of defence and later of victory; and incidentally, as Churchill always recognised, it was Mr. Rees' "very unpleasant character," the late Lord Beaverbrook, who was his right arm in making the only possible defence, the R.A.F., effective. Mr. Rees obscures all this by wondering whether it was not the nation and the moment that made the man, rather than the reverse.

SUCH SPECULATION is as irrelevant as the mediaeval disputation about how many angels could dance on the point of a needle. Mr. Rees does not comprehend that the truth, however simple and platitudinous, is that without Churchill—or *with* Halifax or Chamberlain—the *Luftwaffe* assault of summer 1940 would have been successful and would have been followed by German occupation.

I almost wrote that in such an event Mr. Rees would not have been permitted to write his article about Churchill. Now I look at it again, I think he might have been encouraged to do so. I hope he would have refused.

"Who is a Jew?"

IN the May issue of ENCOUNTER you had an article entitled "Who is a Jew?" The definition in *The Penguin English Dictionary* (1965), compiled by G. N. Garmonsway, puts it succinctly:

> *Jew n* member of Hebrew race; believer in Hebrew religion; (*coll*) extortionate moneylender; astute trader; miser—*jew v/t* (*coll*) defraud, cheat; *j.down* lower (price) by haggling.

The dictionary purports to contain the latest information on the use of the English language. Does this definition really represent what people today understand by the word Jew? Or is the dictionary hopelessly out of date? I choose to believe the latter.

TIBY SHARLIN

Cambridge

I DID at least venture a definition; your correspondent doesn't. Mr. Talmon's article "Who is a Jew?" made abundantly clear the difficulty of formulating today a single unambiguous answer. Would your correspondent agree with one suggested by Mr. Talmon: "a person of the Jewish race or religion, who has not formally embraced a non-Jewish religion, no matter whether he observes his own or does not"?

NORMAN GARMONSWAY

University of Toronto

AUTHORS

Eugène Ionesco's plays—*Rhinoceros, Exit the King, The Greeting,* etc.—are published by Calder (London) in a seven-volume collected edition. He contributed an essay, "The Writer and His Problems" (also translated by John Weightman) to the September 1964 ENCOUNTER....

Maurice Girodias established his Olympic (formerly Obelisk) Press in Paris in the '50s and it flourished there until recent Gaullist censorship. An anthology from his publications was recently published in New York by Grove Press and in London by Calder & Boyars, and was the point of departure for George Steiner's critique of pornography, "Night Words," in the October 1965 ENCOUNTER. Mr. Steiner will be replying to M. Girodias and his other critics in an early number....

Martin Turnell is the author of *The Novel in France* (1950) and *The Art of French Fiction* (1959), both published by Hamish Hamilton. He contributed articles on Gide, Montherlant, and Sainte-Beuve to previous issues of ENCOUNTER (August 1960, June 1961, May 1962)....

Mary Ellmann, who is the wife of Professor Richard Ellmann, the biographer of Joyce, spent last year in residence in England....

Frank Tuohy's novels include *The Admiral and the Nuns* (1962) and *The Ice Saints* (1964), both published by Macmillan. His story, "A Special Relationship," appeared in ENCOUNTER (August 1965)....

Asa Briggs is Professor of History and Dean of the School of Social Studies at the University of Sussex, and his most recent historical works are the second volume of *The Golden Age of Wireless* (O.U.P.) and *Victorian Cities* (Odhams)....

David Marquand, who writes regularly for ENCOUNTER, is now a tutor in contemporary political theory at the University of Sussex near Brighton. He is at work on a biography of J. Ramsay MacDonald....

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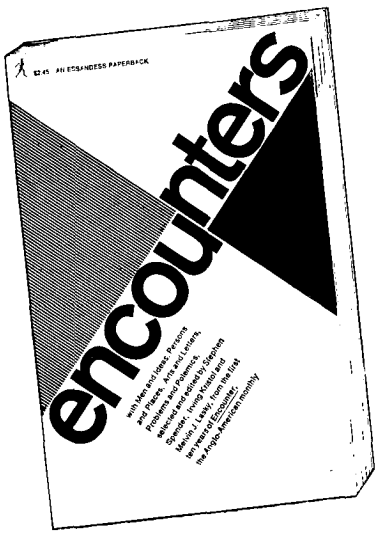

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